

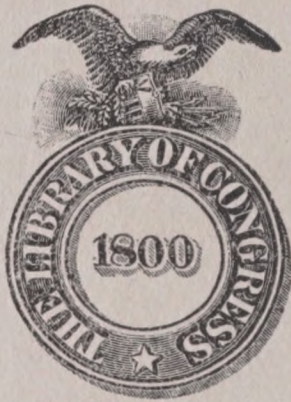
# JACK HEATON

## GOLD SEEKER



A. FREDERICK COLLINS





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JACK HEATON, GOLD SEEKER



*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

WONDERS OF NATURAL HISTORY

JACK HEATON, GOLD SEEKER

JACK HEATON, WIRELESS OPERATOR

JACK HEATON, OIL PROSPECTOR

THE BOYS' AIRPLANE BOOK

THE BOYS' BOOK OF SUBMARINES

HANDICRAFT FOR BOYS

INVENTING FOR BOYS

FARM AND GARDEN TRACTORS









"HIS FIRST EFFORTS AT SNOWSHOEING WERE LAUGHABLE IN  
THE EXTREME."

—Page 115



# JACK HEATON

## GOLD SEEKER

*Archie*  
BY  
A. FREDERICK COLLINS

*Author of "Inventing for Boys," "Handicraft for Boys," "Jack Heaton, Oil Prospector," etc.*

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
MORGAN DENNIS



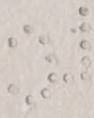
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SwP. Dec. 5, 1921

To  
THE CORYS  
WITH PLEASANT MEMORIES OF  
ALASKAN NIGHTS







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JACK HEATON, GOLD SEEKER







# JACK HEATON, GOLD SEEKER

## CHAPTER I

### HOW THE TROUBLE STARTED

“WELL glory be! an’ if it ain’t Jack Heaton hisself. An’ right glad am I to see yuh, Jack. Bill will be mighty glad, too, for he’s that bugs on goin’ to South America for them di-am-onds. Sure he’s been talkin’ o’ nothin’ else these last two weeks gone Saturday. An’ how are yuh anyhow, Jack?”

It was Mrs. Adams, Bill’s warm-hearted and courageous mother, who had answered the bell and was greeting Jack in this whole-souled fashion.

Since the boys had returned from Mexico and had come into possession of all that money for the services they had rendered the *American Consolidated Oil Company, Inc.*, the Adamses, mother and son, had risen in the world not only figuratively but very literally, for instead of living in a shanty hard by the gas-house under



## 2 JACK HEATON, GOLD SEEKER

the viaduct which spans Manhattan Street, they had moved into a five room apartment on Claremont Avenue—and a front apartment overlooking the Hudson River at that. No wonder, then, that Mrs. Adams was emitting her good nature in all directions like rays of radium and that of all persons Jack was an especial target for them.

“Bill’s in the parlor, Jack; go right in,” she said with emphasis on the *parlor*, for it was the only one she had ever been the mistress of in all her hardworking life.

“Well, Bill, what do you think you’re doing, getting ready to go after a *yegg* or rehearsing for a movie?” asked Jack as he reached the front room, which by the grace of landlords and popular usage is known as the parlor, where he found his *pal* engaged in the gentle pastime of snapping a six-gun.

Bill cut short his exercises with the weapon that had seen such hard service in Mexico so recently and he laughed lightly, though no one except his closest friends would have been aware of it.

“Nary one, Jack, but I’ve had one o’ them hunch things that you used to get and it’s the



one best bet as how me and you are goin' to the wilds o' the Amazon and capture some o' them chunks o' mud similar like and appertainin' to the one you wears on your mitt. So I was just limberin' up my trigger finger a bit with a little action."

"Oh, you were, were you," remarked Jack with a mild touch of sarcasm in his voice.

"Yes, an' I was just thinkin' about 'phonin' you to find out how soon we could get under way. You see, I haven't done a tap to make a dollar since our landfall and owin' to the high cost o' livin'—we're over two hundred feet above Manhattan Street now—my piles' nosin' down like a submarine and it'll soon be restin' on the bottom and we'll be back where we come from. So I'm askin' you, not only as man to man but as my pal, when do we start?"

"We don't head that way this time," replied Jack, "we head *north*, with a capital N."

"Whad'a mean we head north?" asked Bill in utter amazement.

"That's exactly what I came over to see you about, Bill. I've had half-a-dozen jobs offered me since we came back but routine work is entirely out of my line so what's the use in wast-



## 4 JACK HEATON, GOLD SEEKER

ing some one's else good money and my own good time. No, I've tried it and I can't be a good man Friday for any business concern—not even for my dad's.

“So you see you and I are in the same class—everything going out and nothing coming in and I've been wondering a lot lately what we could scare up that would make a noise like a million dollars. Say Bill, did you ever read Jack London's ‘Call of the Wild’?” Jack put the question without notice.

“‘Call o' the Wild’?” mused Bill, turning the phrase over in his dome of thought; “I've heard all kinds o' calls o' wild men an' wild women but never do I remember any wild call by this blokie Jack London. Who is this guy anyway?”

“There's no use talking to a fellow like that,” thought Jack, but then, as in dozens of other instances in the past, he patiently explained who Jack London was and repeated the tale as told by that past master of fiction, for the benefit of his less well-read pal.

“Now the point I'm driving at is this,” he went on. “Jack London tells us that white men who were prospecting in the land of the *Yeehats*,



a tribe of Indians in the gold country of Alaska, found diggings where there was *gold, gold, nothing but gold*, I tell you, and they packed it in moosehide sacks so that they could get it back to civilization. Then the Yeehats came upon and killed them and the shining yellow metal fell into their hands. The gold must still be up there, and you can't dispute it either."

At this recital Bill's big blue eyes bulged out like those of a spider watching a fly. He had caught the drift of what Jack was saying and if there is any one thing that will set an inert imagination to functioning quicker or fix the attention of the human mind faster than another it is the mordant of seeking out this precious metal that we call gold. Then he blinked his eyes and shook his head.

"It sounds to me," he said finally, which in the lingo of the cowboy, means that he had his doubts. "If this is a yarn this London feller wrote how do we know that he didn't make up the Yeehats and the gold just like he made up the rest of it," Bill wanted to know, and not without reason.

"I'll tell you how. That book was given to me for a birthday present when I was about



## 6 JACK HEATON, GOLD SEEKER

ten years old and whenever I wanted to read a good story I took it up just as everybody, from the rag-picker to the president, re-reads 'Robinson Crusoe' and 'Treasure Island.' So one fine day, not long after we got back from the oil-fields I spied the book and read it again; then all of a sudden this ending about the Yee-hats and the gold in sacks struck me that there might be some truth lurking behind the fiction like a *greaser* behind a giant cactus or a Siwash behind a totem pole."

"But how can we find out for sure?"

"I have found out already. I wrote to the *Secretary of the Bureau of Ethnology* at Washington and to the *Minister of the Interior of Canada*, and they sent me handbooks that tell all about the Indians of Alaska and the Yukon Territory and I've got the real *dope* on them."

Bill had a high regard for Jack's way of boring into things and this scheme of going to the governments for information about the Indians up there in the far Northland seemed to his untrained mind to approach very closely to a high order of genius. Still he was not entirely convinced.

"That shows that the climax of London's



book relating to the Yeehats is straight from the shoulder, doesn't it?" Jack wound up.

"That part about the Yeehats is all right but how about the gold? Because a tribe of Indians called the Yeehats lived up there doesn't say that pioneer prospectors actually found the nuggets, got it, piled it up in sacks ready to bring back where they could spend it and then were killed off by the Indians. Mind you, Jack, I'm not sayin' as how it couldn't have happened but I'm only sayin' as how I'd like to know for sure afore we goes, see?"

"Well first of all there's the Yeehats—" Jack began to explain all over again.

"That part about the Yeehats is all O. K.; there's no blinkin' at facts. No one I'll say, no not even a bookmaker could think up such an outlandish name as *Yeehat* even to splice it to a redskin for a name, but any one who couldn't think about gold in chunks would be lonesome if he had a brain," argued Bill.

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," called out Jack. "First of all never call a man who writes books a bookmaker. A man who puts his pen to paper and writes down various things for other folks to read is a *maker of books* while



## 8 JACK HEATON, GOLD SEEKER

a man that takes bets at a race track is a *book-maker*. Now don't get these two professions mixed up again."

"The trouble with you, Jack, is that you can't see the woods because o' the trees, as you used to tell me down in Mexico when I picked you up on some point that didn't have anything to do with the case. What's the *diff* I'd like to know, whether he was a maker o' books as you calls him or a bookmaker as I calls him. Well go on with your ratkillin'."

"What I was going to say when you side-tracked me was that when a writer writes a book every idea that goes into it really comes from some outside source and consequently all this stuff that we call inspiration and imagination is more or less bunk. This being true, I hold that what London wrote about the prospectors, the gold they found, the moosehide sacks of it they piled up and the Yeehats, were not just mere fleeting fancies which were conjured up in his brain to serve his purpose for the story but hard and fast facts that he had heard about when he was up above there in Alaska."

"I knows what you say and I guess I knows what you're talking about, but as against the



book that tells about the Yeehats and the sacks o' gold in the land where the rainbow ends give me the straight tip on the di-*am*-onds that Jack Heaton got from the cannibal princess where the rainbow begins," plugged in Bill, still bent on the diamond project.

"Don't you see Bill it will take a mint of money to outfit that diamond hunting expedition—why we'd have to take a small army with us to cope with those Amazonian savages while as I told you before they're all Christianized, peace-loving folks in the far north—too cold to be anything else. Why we couldn't begin to finance this diamond proposition between us even if we put every dollar we have to our names in it," Jack drove his argument home and he could see that the force of his logic and oratory was beginning to have the desired effect on his hard-headed pal.

"Couldn't you get the directors of the *American Consolidated Oil Company* to take a flyer and back us in the di-*am*-ond venture," further persisted Bill.

"I might be able to get them to see it but those old four-per-centers are long on sure things and very short on anything that looks



like a gamble. I'd hate to have any of them go into anything with us that was not as sure of succeeding as tomorrow's sun is sure of rising, for if we ever went down there and failed to bring back a boat load of diamonds as large as the *Koohinoor*, or *Mountain of Light* as it is called, they'd think they'd been stung by a nest of hornets and if we didn't bring back any at all they'd want to throw us into the Atlantic Ocean."

"They're sure enough dead-game sports," Bill commented sadly, "but there's one thing certain and that is if I don't make a ten-strike soon I'll have to get a job as a longshoreman and me mudder and me 'ull be movin' down to the shanty. Get me?"

"As a longshoreman only gets ten dollars a day for six or eight hours' work I guess the job at that might net you enough to keep the coyote from sleeping in the vestibule of your apartment. If I wasn't too heavy for light work and too light for heavy work I'd get a job on the docks myself. As things now stand I'm going to Alaska and I'll bring back so much gold that if I threw it on the market there'd be a slump in the price of it," orated Jack boastfully, as he



rubbed his hands together in pleasurable anticipation like a miserable young Shylock. But the magic of gold is apt to make misers of even the most generous folks.

“Yuh lads come now and have a bite to eat,” sang out Mrs. Adams cheerily and the two youngsters went through an arched hole in the wall that connected, yet separated the parlor from the dining room, though this may sound a bit paradoxical. The latter room was decorated with a plate rail around the wall and a great vari-colored dome lamp hanging from the ceiling.

Under the lamp was a table laid with a cloth as white, silver as bright and china as fine as would be found, Jack opined, up or down the Avenue or even over on Riverside Drive. Bill’s mother was almost as proud of her new home and its fixtures as she was of her boy and that is saying all of it. As for Jack, why she thought he was the smartest boy in the world; yes, she truly did, and whatever he said went with her.

Their apartment was tastily furnished and comfortable, and he was glad to know that he had been, in a measure, indirectly responsible for it. It has often been said that travel is the



great educator but the possession of money goes a mighty long ways toward making gentlemen out of coal heavers and ladies out of scrub women. True there was still some room for improvement in the way Bill and his mother handled "English as she is spoke" but no improvement was needed in their hearts.

"So yuh lads are goin' to South America for di-*am*-onds, are yuh," said Mrs. Adams when they were seated. "Well, it 'ud be a fine and ge-glorious thing if you'd fetch home a couple of scuttles of them baubles and throw them to those as can afford 'em at so much per throw," and her eyes reflected the happy thought which she had voiced, as a Kimberly blue-white stone reflects the light of the sun. "But do yuh know Jack," she added pensively, "I'd a deal ruther have me boy Bill livin' with me in the shanty than to have him riskin' his young life down there on the equator with those man-aters."

"You can rest easy in your mind on that score, Mrs. Adams," Jack assured her, "for I've nearly persuaded Bill to give up this South American venture and join me in an expedition to the Alaskan gold fields, to search for a few sacks of nuggets."



“Ilasker, Ilasker? No, I never heard of the place before. It must not have been on the map when I went to school,” thought Mrs. Adams out loud.

“You’ve heard of the Yukon?” suggested Jack.

“Yukon, Yukon? I can’t say that I have, but,” and her eyes brightened as though she had solved a jigsaw puzzle, “I have heard of the Klondike.”

“That accounts for it then,” said Jack, “for the Klondike is a gold district and it is named from the Klondike River which it is on. The Klondike River is in the Yukon Territory, which belongs to Canada, and this is directly east of Alaska. The Klondike River is really only a stream, perhaps not over a hundred feet wide, but so rich were the early gold fields there that practically all of the Yukon Territory and a part of Alaska to boot has been called the Klondike country. Such is the fame and power of gold.”

“We own Ilasker, don’t we Jack?” Bill wanted to know.

“Yes, though she used to belong to Russia but the U. S., bought her about fifty years ago for seven million, two hundred thousand dollars.



Since then she has produced three hundred million dollars worth of gold. Some bargain, what say, Bill?"

"I'll say it was," replied his pal.

"It came about this way," continued Jack, "when she was owned by Russia she was a losing deal for that country because in the first place she was too far away from the seat of government and there was no wire or wireless communication at that time between them; and in the second place Russia hadn't any more of a notion as to how to govern her than she has of governing herself now.

"When the Civil War was on Russia was a good friend of the Union and helped us in every way she could, even to loaning us her warships. As Russia wanted to dispose of Alaska and Uncle Sam wanted to pay something for the services she had rendered, Mr. Seward, who was Secretary of State in President Lincoln's Cabinet, bought the territory, which was then considered entirely worthless, from her.

"The International boundary line that divides Alaska from Canada was in dispute between the United States and Great Britain almost from the time we got her from Russia



but neither country did any worrying over it for Alaska was not supposed to be worth arguing about. But when gold was discovered on the Yukon River in 1896 and at Cape Nome in 1898 there was a great stampede, just as there was to California in '49. Then it was that both the United States and Great Britain got busy and a commission met in London, England, in 1903 to settle the matter, which was done to the satisfaction of both countries."

"How far away are these gold fields that you and Bill are goin' to?" Mrs. Adams asked; "are they as far away as the di-am-ond fields of South America?"

"I should say about the same distance, Mrs. Adams, and that is in the neighborhood of some five thousand miles."

"It's sure some little ways off," chipped in Bill, "but distance doesn't count; what we wants is the yellow butter, hey Buddie?"

"That's what we're after; other folks have found it and we stand as good a chance as they did. Are you with me, Bill?"

"It sounds to me, Jack, but I'll go with youse to Ilasker on your hunch even if we have to walk back."



“Good!” ejaculated Jack; “I guessed you would from the start. And so you see all of this six-gun practice is tommyrot, for the men of the frozen north are different from those of the burnt-up south, for whether they are Americans, French-Canadians, Indians or half-breeds, they are all white men—white at heart—and you’ll never have any use for a side arm up there.”

“It must be a orful nice country, but if you don’t mind I’m going to tote mine along just the same.”

“Then it’s all settled, is it, Bill?”

“I’m right there, pal o’ mine, every time.”

The boys struck hands and their new adventure was on.



## CHAPTER II

HO! FOR THE GOLD COUNTRY!

“**N**OW that I’ve declared myself in on this game I wants to know something about how it is supposed to be played,” said Bill, who, having once thrown his pet scheme overboard went into the new one heart and soul. How big a country is this here Ilasker and to what part do we hike?”

Now Bill was like lots of other born and bred “Noo” Yorkers in that wherever there was an *a* on the end of a word he invariably substituted *er* for it. As Bill’s mother had excused herself and made her exit, Jack took it upon himself to set his pal to rights.

“Not *Ile-ask’-her*, Bill, but *A-las’-ka*; get that? *A-las’-ka*!”

“All right, *A-las’-ker* then; have it any way,” groused Bill who, though he always wanted to know the right of every thing and had insisted time and time again that Jack correct him whenever he said or did anything that was not



“accordin’ to Hoyle,” as he put it, still he was a little peeved when his pal did so, and in this respect he was not unlike the common run of folks whether of low or high degree.

“It’s a larger country than you’d think. Here are two maps of her that I’ve brought along,” said Jack as he produced, unfolded and spread the large sheets on the floor. This done, both he and Bill dropped to the correct prone position for shooting—that is lying flat on their stomachs with their faces downward—a position of great value in skirmishes on the border, but one seldom needed in civilized New York, unless it be to size up a map to the best advantage.

“This smaller one will give you an idea of how big she really is,” continued Jack; “it shows Alaska laid on top of the United States, that is compared with her. You see the main part of her is nearly square and she is hemmed in by the Pacific and Arctic Oceans all round except on her eastern boundary which is the Yukon Territory of Canada.

“If you lay the square part of Alaska over the middle part of the United States as this map shows, it will cover about all of Illinois, Wisconsin, Montana, Iowa, Missouri, North and



South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma; then that handle of coast land, which is less than a hundred miles wide and some five hundred miles long, extends southeast along the western edge of Canada and this strip would reach clear across Kentucky, Tennessee and Georgia to the Atlantic Ocean, while pushing out to the southwest is the Alaska Peninsula and beyond it the Aleutian Islands.

“The peninsula is nearly five hundred miles long and the islands are strung out for another five hundred miles or more, so that the tail end of them would touch the Pacific Ocean in California. You see for size, Texas, which we think is a pretty big state, isn’t in it with Alaska.”

“It’s almost big enough to get lost in,” reflected Bill dryly.

“Now this large one is a government map of Alaska and I’ll show you exactly where we are headed for. See that red cross I’ve marked there just below the Arctic Circle on the Big Black River? Well, that’s our destination and when we reach it we’ll be in the land of the Yeehats. At any rate that is where they once lived, for from what I have gathered they were wiped out of existence some years ago. Once we get



into their country it's up to us to find out where *the gold is cached.*"<sup>1</sup>

"But suppose the Yeehats, or some other tribe of Indians, are still there and that they've got the gold corralled, what then?" Bill wanted to know.

"Oh well, we'll have to treat with them according to the exigencies of the case. The first thing we must do though is to get there, the next is to locate the gold and when this preliminary but important work is done I think we can safely say that it is ours."

"Ours not because we found it first but because we found it last," Bill added to clinch the ownership.

"Exactly, or words to that effect."

"Must be awful cold up there," suggested Bill as his eyes wandered around the sub-Arctic region on the map.

"In summer it's a mighty pleasant place but in winter it does get a little chilly, for sometimes the bottom nearly drops out of the thermometer and the quicksilver falls to fifty, sixty and even seventy degrees below zero; but you don't mind a little thing like cold weather do you?"

<sup>1</sup>Pronounced *cached*, and means hidden purposely.



“No,” replied Bill thoughtfully, “but I kicked all last winter to the superintendent of this here apartment buildin’ because the heat was only sixty-eight degrees while I likes it about seventy-two degrees. If I’d a-known we was goin’ on this here trip to the frigid zone I’d a-told him to bank the fires, or let ’em go out entirely, so I’d get used to it. Lettin’ that be as it may, what kind of an outfit do we want and do we get it here or when we gets up into that blarsted country?”

“We’ll take our rifles and I suppose we ought to have a shot-gun for small game, and while, as I have said before, the inhabitants, whatever may be their color or country, are all peace abiding folks still we ought to take our six-guns along so that we can protect our gold when we get back to civilized lands again.”

“An’ we’d better take our thermos bottles, solid alcohol cookin’ outfit, flash lamps, compasses and a pair of pliers with us, not forgettin’ me mouth-organ,” put in Bill.

“By all means,” allowed Jack; “as for the rest of it we can find out exactly what we need in the way of rations and equipment when we reach Dawson or Circle City. We don’t want



to overload ourselves but there must be a-plenty of the necessaries, for, the way I figure it, we'll probably have to stay the best part of a year in those parts."

"When do we leave for this promised land o' gold and sixty degrees below zero?" inquired impatient red-headed Bill.

"It's about the right time of the year for us to be pilgriming now," returned his partner; "that's why I'm here."

"How long will it take us to get up there?"

"Oh, about three weeks or so if we make connections and don't lose too much time on the way."

"Then I takes it the weather'll still be warm when we arrives. We'll get a canoe, or maybe a couple o' them, and paddle up this Big Black River until we comes to the land of the Yee-hats," suggested Bill.

"No, that's not my idea of it at all. You see, Bill, so much of the country where we are going is low that it is more or less wet all the time and it would make traveling overland in summer with our outfit a hard game. The way I've figured it out is that we ought to start from Circle City when winter sets in and travel by dog-



sled; then we can go up or down rivers, over them, cut cross country, yes, to the North Pole if we want to, and without any hard work on our part.

“Winter sets in early up there and by the time we reach Circle, get our outfit, learn the lay of the land, hear what all the old timers have to say and the first snow begins to fly, we’ll be just about ready to strike out.”

Bill shoved his hands in his pockets, went to the window and focused his eyes on a great warship that lay at anchor in the Hudson. He was wondering, not about the craft for he knew all about her and every other kind afloat; he likewise knew about some of those craft that navigated the land as for instance *hawses*, but this traveling in winter in search of gold with dog-sleds was a deep mystery to him.

“In winter the gold’ll be snowed under and we’d never find it I’m a-thinkin’,” he said thoughtfully.

“Take it from me, Bill, wherever the gold has been *cached* there will be signs that will point out the place as plain as the nose on your face. All we’ve got to do is to find the signs—uncovering the gold will be easy,” argued Jack.



"It sounds to me, Buddy, but if we're goin', the sooner the quicker says I."

"The *Twentieth Century Limited* leaves the Grand Central Station at 2:45 in the afternoon and pulls into the LaSalle Street Station at Chicago the next morning in time so that we can make connection with the *North Coast Limited* of the *Burlington Route* which carries a *Northern Pacific* sleeper through to Seattle. How about leaving to-morrow afternoon?"

"All to the good; that'll give me time to see me goil and tell her I'm goin' to Ilasker," for Bill, be it known had become very much smitten with Vera Clair, the little blond telephone girl down in the office of the *American Consolidated Oil Company*. And Vera, who could roll the number *three* under, over, through and above her tongue with the best of operators, and who also lived in Harlem, thought quite well of Bill, too.

"If you say that," warned Jack, "Miss Clair will think you are going to ask her a very important question and you might find yourself in a somewhat embarrassing position."

"What d'you mean 'barrassin' position,' "



questioned Bill sharply, blinking the while at Jack.

“Why she might think you meant you were going to pop the question——”

“Put the pedal on that soft stuff right where you are, or I’ll make youse put up your dooks, see Buddy.”

“Then say *A-las-ka*, as I told you before, and you’ll be on the safe side,” again explained Jack.

“All right, *A-las-ker* then,” Bill attempted once more and Jack gave up trying to teach him how to pronounce it as a bad job.

The next afternoon the boys met at the Grand Central Station with their big suit cases and each carried in his money-belt two hundred dollars in cash and a draft on the National Bank at Skagway for a thousand dollars. It was not long before they were on board the *Twentieth Century Limited* and were being whirled through the tunnel under New York and up to Mott Haven; there the powerful electric locomotive gave way to a gigantic steam locomotive and they were soon running along the edge



of the historic Hudson River headed toward the field of their new endeavors.

At the sight of the Palisades Bill could no longer restrain his aesthetic feelings—oh yes, Bill had them too, and he knew the beautiful when he saw it.

“I tell youse the Hudson has got them all *faded*, Jack. I’ve seen ’em all includin’ the Schuylkill at Philadelphia and they might as well get offen the map.”

“There are three rivers you haven’t seen yet, Bill, and these are the Mississippi, the Yukon and the Amazon. When you have seen these great streams you’ll be in a better position to judge the merits of the Hudson.”

“This position right here in seat 2, car 30 is good enough for me to size up the Hudson. Just as Noo York is the onliest town in the world so the Hudson is the onliest river on the map. Somebody oughter give Mr. H. Hudson a medal for havin’ discovered it; an’ when we come back, richer’n Rockefeller, I’ll donate one to him that is twenty-four carats fine.”

Jack had the porter fix a table between the seats and laid out his time-tables of the three railroads that were to carry them across the



continent. Then for Bill's enlightenment and his own pleasure he traced the route they were to make to Seattle and thence on up to Circle City, Alaska.

"Let's see, we reach Chicago to-morrow morning and change cars there. Then we're in for a long ride, for it will take us about three days and nights to make the trip. We'll get in to Seattle next Saturday morning some time. Our boat leaves Seattle the following Monday morning and this will give us all the time we want to see Seattle."

"Now look up this boat trip from Seattle to Skagway," said Bill.

"We take the *S.S. Princess Alice* and sail up through Puget Sound until we reach the northern end of Vancouver Island, when we come to the open sea; then we run through Hecate Strait, between the Queen Charlotte Islands and the Province of Columbia, when we pass through Dixon Entrance into Clarence Strait and are in Alaskan waters. Farther on when we get to Juneau we'll begin to see something that looks like real scenery for that's the beginning of the great glaciers."

"I'm not so keen on seein' scenery as I am



on seein' gold," vouchsafed Bill, whose resultant financial success in the Mexican expedition seemed to have completely turned his young head from contentment and the love of adventure into discontent and a violent itching for riches.

"You'll see both a-plenty before we're through with it, take it from me."

"What's all them pink spots on the map, islands?" inquired Bill scanning them closely.

"Yes, and the blue part outside is the Pacific Ocean while that on the inside represents various inlets, straits, sounds, canals, etc. So you see we take what is called the *inside route* and it will be as smooth sailing as if we were going to Albany on the day boat."

"An' what happens when we land at Skagway?"

"There we change to the railroad, which has been built in recent years over the White Pass across the Coast Range, and we are then in the Yukon Territory which, as I told you and your mother, is a part of Canada. The railroad ends at White Horse, a town about a hundred miles farther north. We'll still have about seven hundred miles to travel before we get to Circle



City, but we do this leg by a steamer on the Yukon River, and from there to the land of the Yeehats on the Big Black River we'll have to cover with dog-sleds," concluded Jack.

Their journey across the continent was about as exciting as a trip from Manhattan Street to Bowling Green on the Subway. While the boys were very much awake when in their waking state, when it came to sleeping they could beat the seven sleepers by a stretch, and as for appetites—well, they just naturally had an exaggerated idea of what their stomachs were for—and ate like young pug-uglies. In truth they were on the job every time the dining car waiter announced the last call for breakfast and the first call for lunch and dinner.

As they were nearing Savanna up in the northwest corner of Illinois, Jack told his pal that they would soon strike the Mississippi River and that from there on to St. Paul the railroad parallels the 'father of waters.'

"The Mississippi is a thousand five hundred miles long, has its head waters at Lake Itaska in Northern Minnesota and empties into the Gulf of Mexico about a hundred miles south of New Orleans," explained Jack. "You will see



from this, Bill, that there are other rivers in our United States besides the noble Hudson."

Presently the train ran right along side of the great river. Bill took one look at the installment of scenery which lay spread out before them as flat as a board and then he burst out into a long and loud cackle, making, according to Jack's way of thinking, a holy show of them both.

"Why the big noise?" questioned Jack in a sour voice, for he was exasperated beyond all measure at this unseemly conduct of his pal.

"It's enough to make a bucking broncho laugh. The Mississippi eh? and you'd put it in the same class with the Hudson? Why it's nothin' but a stream o' mud," Bill made answer.

"You must remember that we're a thousand miles from its delta," expostulated Jack.

"That's nothin'; the Hudson's so wide at Noo York the politicians can't get enough money together at one time to build a bridge acrost it, see Buddy?"

And let it be said in Bill's behalf that that part of the Mississippi which is visible to the



eye where the Burlington railway parallels it does make a mighty poor showing.

The boys were conspicuous for their silence all the rest of the way to St. Paul for Bill had made up his mind that he wouldn't let even his pal run down *his* Hudson River, and Jack had taken a mental vow that, pal or no pal, he would never again point out any wonder, ancient or modern, whether produced by nature or fashioned by the hand of man again to Bill, because the latter always pooh-poohed everything unless it was in or intimately associated with the city of Bagdad-on-the-Hudson.

As the train was nearing Livingstone, Montana, late in the afternoon of the following day the boys had entirely forgotten that the muddy waters of the Mississippi had been the innocent cause of making them a little sore at each other and all was to the merry with them again.

Livingstone is the junction where the change is made for Gardiner, the "gateway of the Yellowstone," and everybody in the car was talking about the hot-springs, the geysers, the 'Devil's Paint Pot,' 'Hell's Half-Acre' and other wonders to be seen there. Moreover quite a number of passengers were tourists who



had made this long western trip for the express purpose of seeing the Park.

"We should by all means have seen the Park since we are so near it. It was a great mistake of mine to have bought our tickets through to Seattle without a stop-over here," said Jack who was genuinely regretful that he had not thought of it at the time, but it was too late now.

"Never youse mind," bolstered up Bill cheerily, "we'll stop off when we comes back and we'll have all the time we needs and plenty o' coin to do it on."

"That *listens* all right too but I have observed it is very seldom indeed that a fellow ever returns over the same trail that he sets out on, and that the time to see a thing is when he passes by the first time. Well, we'll get the gold we're after and then I'm going to make a tour of the world strictly for pleasure."

"I'm with youse Jack," responded Bill heartily.

Jack made no reply for he could see himself carrying Bill along as a piece of excess baggage and having him size up everything they saw using *his* Noo York, as he calls it, as a yardstick to measure it by. Bill was all right for a



trip of any kind where a sure-shot and brute-force were needed but on a pleasure trip around the world—well he preferred to go it alone.

Came the time when the shine porter indicated his desire to brush off the boys and they knew that they were getting close to the end of the first leg of their journey—Seattle. They were right glad to get off the train, though withal they had had a pleasant journey and had met a number of interesting people. Among them was a Mr. Rayleigh who was accompanied by his very charming daughter Miss Vivian.

Jack had told the Rayleighs a little of his varied experiences in the World War, of his expedition to the Arctics, of his more recent journey to Mexico (giving Bill all the credit of their adventures there) and of their proposed trip to Alaska to find gold. The net result of it all was that the chance acquaintance ripened into a warm friendship before they left the train at Seattle and his new found friends gave Jack a very cordial invitation to visit them in Chicago when he returned from his quest in the Northland, but they left poor Bill out in the cold.

Jack didn't blame Mr. Rayleigh much for he



didn't know Bill's heart and he judged him by exterior appearances only. Poor Bill! the only way he could ever get a look-in anywhere was when some one saw him in action, and if Mr. Rayleigh could have seen him swatting German U-boats, or on the 'dobe in that fight with Lopez's gang he would have welcomed him with open arms.

As it was, Jack accepted the invitation so cordially given, with avidity, for he liked Miss Vivian—she was so different from those New York girls (but hush! it would never do to voice this thought in Bill's hearing or there would be a pitched battle on the spot) and she seemed to him more like a beautiful dream picture than a real being who lived in a world of three dimensions.

"Yes," he said to himself, "I've simply got to get that gold now, there's no two ways about it."

Seattle, so named after old Chief Seattle, an Indian who was friendly to the whites, is built on a site where a handful of Indians once had their village, but it was an important place even then in virtue of its being a convenient point



where every once in a while thousands of Indians would meet and hold their powwows.

It was settled by the pale faces about seventy years ago and when the gold stampede for the Klondike was on, it was the great center for outfitting the prospectors. Later on Skagway became the chief outfitting station but as the latter town is in Alaska a duty must also be paid by those who cross over the boundary line into the Yukon Territory since it is a part of Canada. To get around this the boys concluded that they would wait until they got to Circle City and outfit up there if this was possible.

Jack was rather surprised to find that Seattle was a fine, up-to-date city in every sense of the word but of course Bill couldn't see it that way at all, so listen to him yawp:

"Youse could set the whole blinkin' town down on the East Side of Noo York and then where'd it be? Youse couldn't find it, see!"

By the following Monday the boys had seen everything that Seattle and the surrounding country had to offer but the only things that interested Bill were the Siwash Indians and Mount Ranier.



"I suppose you'll say that the New Yorkers are dirtier than these Siwashes and that Mount Ranier can't hold a candle to the Palisades," Jack bantered him.

"Somebody must have taken the *wash* out of them Siwashes from the way they smell, and as for Mount Ranier I'll say it's a real mountain. Let's climb it, what say, Jack?"

"After we get the gold," was his pal's comeback.

The five days that followed on the *S. S. Princess Alice* were long, bright, glorious, tiresome ones and the boys would have enjoyed every minute of the time if that disconcerting, maddening, magic word *gold* had not kept burning in their brains. They saw yellow and the nearer they came to that wonderful land in the far north, which the discoveries of gold had made as famous as diamonds have made the Kimberly mines or watered stock has made Wall Street, their very beings seemed to be transmuted into the precious metal.

Hence, neither the great Coast Range Mountains nor the wonderful glaciers appealed overmuch to these youngsters who had set their



hearts on getting gold out of the Yukon-Arctic district just as firmly as had ever the most seasoned prospector.

But Juneau did make an impression on Bill for he heard tales of gold up there the like of which he had never heard before. Only once did he think to belittle the town by making odious comparisons of it with his "Noo York" but with Jack's help he smothered the attempt for he was in the gold country now and was carried away by that malignant disease known as the *gold fever*.



## CHAPTER III

### ON THE EDGE OF THINGS

THE *Princess Alice* made a stop for a few hours at Juneau, a town standing on a promontory between Lynn Canal and the Taku River, and the boys, with many other passengers, disembarked to see what they could see. Here for the first time they felt they were getting pretty close to the field of their future activities for they were in Alaska, the land of the midnight sun and the aurora borealis, the moose and the caribou, the prehistoric glacier and—hidden gold.

Across the water a great mill was in full blast and as they stood looking at it a big, grisly sort of a man, who appeared to be between fifty and sixty, and whose clothes showed that he was an old time prospector, moved over toward them. Evidently he had in mind the idea of holding some small conversation with them, for up on top of the world the inhabitants do not consider



formal introductions as being at all necessary when they feel like talking to any one.

"Goin' to buy it boys?" he asked, grinning good-naturedly to show that his intentions were of the best.

"Afore we do, we'd kinda like to know what it is, for we'd hate to buy a pig-in-a-poke," replied Bill smiling just as cheerfully, only, as I have previously mentioned, whenever Bill smiled the scar across his cheek made him look as if he was getting ready to exterminate a greaser.

"Oh, I see, you youngsters are new up here—tourists maybe," came from the big throated man.

"We're new up here all right," admitted Jack, "but we're not up here to see the sights, or for our health either, but to do a bit of prospecting."

"Shake pards," and he held out a calloused hand, as big as a ham and as horny as a toad's back, to each of them in turn. "I'm Hank Dease, but in these parts I'm known as Grizzly Hank. And who might you fellows be?"

"I'm Jack Heaton of New Jersey, and this is my side-kick, Bill Adams of New York City,



New York County and New York State, and there with the goods as needed."

"I blazes! I'm right glad to know you boys," drawled Grizzly Hank, "for you look to me as if you're made o' the right kind o' timber. Since you're strangers here I'll tell you about Juneau, which I allow is the finest city in the world."

Now Juneau has a population of about two thousand people, so, naturally, Bill was going to jump right in and monopolize things by asking Grizzly Hank if he'd ever been in New York, but Jack gave him the high-sign not to break in and so for once his pal held his peace.

"I'll tell you about the wonderful things we have here first and then if there's any little thing you want to know about prospectin' up here or in the Yukon Territory I'll tell you as good as I know. I've been in this country for nigh onto thirty years and you see how well I've panned out, but you fellows may do better—a few do, but, I blazes, most of 'em don't."

Grizzly Hank had found a couple of good listeners and as he liked to talk he was making the most of them while they lasted.



“That’s the Treadwell mill you are lookin’ at over yonder on Douglas Island. It has an output of gold that runs upwards of eighty thousand dollars a month. The first gold ever found in Alaska was down at Sitka in 1873, but it was old Joe Juneau, a French-Canadian prospector, who showed that gold could be mined here in payin’ quantities.

“At that time another prospector named Treadwell who was in this district had loaned a little money on some claims over there and finally had to take them for the debt. Later on he bought French Pete’s claim which lay next to it for the magnificent sum of five hundred dollars; and these claims which he bought for a mere song are the great Treadwell mines of to-day. I blazes! There are some other mines in this district and since Treadwell took over the original claims the output of gold has been to the tune of a hundred million dollars and the end is nowhere yet in sight. I blazes!”

“Do you mean to say, Mister Dease, that gold is mined over there like coal?” asked Bill, thereby exposing his ignorance.



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The grisly prospector looked amused but he recalled the time when his own ideas of mining gold had been just about as vague.

“You see, boys, gold is found in several ways up here. Sometimes it is 'bedded in quartz when the *ore*, as it is called, has to be mined and then crushed in a stamp mill to get the gold out; more often it is found as free gold, dust and grains and bits of pure gold mixed with the dirt when it must be *panned*, that is, put in a pan and the dirt washed away and then the gold, which is the heaviest, falls to the bottom of the pan, and again,” he lowered his voice to make what he was about to tell them more impressive, “nuggets of gold are picked up from bits the size of a pea to chunks as large as my fist! I blazes! It all depends on the locality.

“These diggin's here are quartz mines and the ore is of mighty low grade—only a couple of dollars in gold to the ton of quartz. To get this gold out the quartz, or ore, is crushed in a mill called a stamp, and the Treadwell has the largest number of stamps of any mill in the world—upwards of two thousand, I blazes!”



Grizzly Hank paused for a moment to get a fresh start.

"Go on Mister Hank, we're listenin' with both ears," urged Bill.

"As you were saying—" Jack paced him.

"As I was about to say," continued the prospector, who was every whit as appreciative of his audience as it was of him, "when Treadwell began to take out gold, old timers all along the coast clear down as far as 'Frisco heard of it, came up and pushed further north believing that they would find other lodes of gold bearing ore and they believed right, I blazes!

"That other mine over there on Douglas Island that you see to the right is the Mexican Mine but it's small fry as against the Treadwell for it only has a hundred and twenty stamps working."

"We're not pertiklarly keen on Mexican mines, oil wells or anything else that goes by the name of *Mex*—we had all the Mexican stuff we wanted when we was down there six months ago," broke in Bill to whom the word brought no very pleasant recollections.

"To this side of the Mexican mine," went



on the prospector, "is the *Ready Bullion* mine and it has a two hundred stamp mill."

"*Ready Bullion* listens good to me," admitted Jack, once more breaking into his discourse.

"Shortly after the Treadwell mine began to show itself a bonanza, a story went the rounds that it was an accidental lode, or a *blowout* as we call it; that is, it was a lode of gold deposited there by some gigantic upheaval of the earth when Alaska was in the makin' and that it was the only place north of fifty-six where gold could be mined at a profit.

"I always believed that yarn was set agoin' to keep other prospectors out of the country; but when it kept on producin', men with picks and shovels came here just the same, and what happened was that other deposits were found and these are the mines that are bein' worked now in southern Alaska.

"Still other prospectors pushed on further north with their packs on their backs, on sleds which they pulled themselves or which were hauled by dog teams, on horses and mules, and they toiled up the *Trail of Heartache*, as the nearly straight-up *White Pass* trail was called



in those days. I blazes, *and*, I was one of 'em.

“Once on the other side of yonder range we prospected for gold bearin’ quartz, and panned the river beds until we reached the Klondike River. There is where Carmack, with two Indian pards, Skookum Jim and Tagish Charlie, had already staked rich claims. One day Carmack went down to the stream to wash a piece of moose he had killed and it was then that he saw gold in the water and when he panned it he got more nuggets than his eyes could believe. News of gold travels faster than greased lightnin’ and it was not long before the biggest gold stampede was on that ever took place in the golden history of gold! I blazes!

“Over night the Klondike became famous and wherever human bein’s lived that spoke a language it was a word that they knew and it meant but one thing to them—and that was gold. And, I blazes, the world knew that gold was bein’ panned out in the Klondike by hundreds and thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars and the world went crazy over it.

“When I got there one mornin’ I was dead-



broke but by night I was a rich man. It was nothin' to wash a hundred, five hundred, I blazes, a thousand dollars from a few pans of gravel. And still further north, somewhere along the Porcupine River, Thornton and a couple of his pards discovered a blow-out where nuggets of gold were so thick they could pick 'em up like stones; they packed them in moosehide sacks and corded them up like stovewood until they had all the gold they thought they could carry out of the country."

Grizzly Hank had the boys going for fair. They stood as though they were magnetized to the spot. Both were itching for more detailed information but neither spoke his mind for they had agreed before they left New York that while they would have to admit they were prospectors bent on finding gold, like countless thousands before them, they would give no hint, under any circumstance, of their real mission to any one.

"Go on—" said Bill impatiently.

"Yes, pards," he went on, his sharp, deep-set eyes brightening which showed that however it was he had failed to keep the elusive metal he had found, his long quest left no cause



for regret; "yes pards, the gold belt runs from the Gulf of Alaska to the Arctic Ocean, and the further north you go the more gold you'll find and—the harder it will be to get it *down under*.<sup>1</sup> I'm goin' to the Porcupine River district as soon as I can get some one to grub-stake me——"

A mighty bellowing blast came from the triple throated whistle of the steamer at the dock and drowned out the alluring voice of the prospector pioneer. Then the warning sound subsided for a moment.

"There's your boat a-whistlin' an' if you're goin' on her you'd better scoot. I blazes! Good-by and good luck."

They started for the boat on the run but their minds were in a semi-torpid condition, for the old miner had surely enough set them by the ears. When they were again on the deck of the *Princess Alice* and had somewhat recovered from the magic of his words they fell to discussing gold, Grizzly Hank and a few other consequential things.

"Moosehide sacks of gold corded up like

<sup>1</sup>In Alaska and the far north the United States is called *down under*.



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stovewood!" repeated Bill blinking his blue eyes.

"The farther north you go the more gold you'll find!" reiterated Jack, for the words sounded like ready money to him.

"Shake, old pard, we're on the right trail," and the boys struck hands with a vengeance. "I was thinkin' as how we orter have taken Grizzly Hank along with us," commented Bill; "he knows all the ropes and he'd a-come in mighty handy."

"I thought of that too when he was talking to us but then we'd have to split up our winnings into thirds which would mean that we'd simply short-change ourselves out of a couple of million dollars or so. Then again his ideas and ours would probably be entirely different for he's a prospector of the old school while we are discoverers of the new school. Finally, 'two's company and three's none' is just as true, I imagine of the trail as it is of a parlor date."

"Agreed to on all points," said Bill, "but when we comes back let's grub-stake him to the limit so that he can eke out a million or so on his own account afore he kicks-in."



Skagway was the jumping off place as far as the *Princess Alice* was concerned and the boys were right glad of it for they were anxious more than ever to get into the heart of things. The town is on the Chilkat Inlet at the head of Lynn Canal and, like many others along the coast, it has a mountain for a background.

They stopped over night at Mrs. Pullen's hotel, which is also a wonderful Alaskan museum, and as they were looking about they came across a rack of the inevitable picture post cards. Bill said he was of a mind to send one down under to a certain little telephone countess, (whom he could see in his mind's eye masticating the indestructible listerated nuggets and hear her say in the deep recesses of his auditory organ "who do you want to talk to?" with the "smile that wins.")

On one of the post cards was a picture of a very pleasant, mild mannered looking gentleman whose kindly eyes and benevolent mouth bore out Jack's statement that all men north of fifty-six are *white* at heart. Under the picture on the card of the somewhat incongruous caption of *Soapy Smith*.

"I suppose he's the Sunday School Su-



perintendent, owner of the First National Bank and mayor of this burg," Bill remarked to his partner.

A prosperous looking individual standing near-by overheard Bill's facetious comment, smiled sadly and said:

"I take it you boys haven't heard the story of Soapy Smith and so I'll enlighten you as to the manner of man he was. Soapy came by his saponified cognomen honestly for he began his career as a full member of the fraternity of gentle grafters. Soapy's line was to wrap up a ten dollar bill with a small bar of soap and sell it from the tail end of a wagon for the small sum of one dollar.

"Then the lamb would take his purchase around in the back alley where no one could see him, and open it up and then he would find that he was out just ninety-nine cents, for while he had the soap the slippery ten-spot still remained as a part of Soapy's financial reserve fund.

"But this graft was too legitimate for Soapy for he had to give a bar of soap worth at least a cent to each and every purchaser. Having accumulated a little coin he drifted in here



with the stampedeers in '98 and opened up a saloon, dance-hall and gambling house. As if this game was too honest he organized a gang of outlaws and they robbed men and killed them too, right and left.

"Law abiding citizens got tired of these hold-ups, for the prospectors and miners began to go through Dyea and use the Chilcoot Pass rather than take a chance of meeting Soapy and his gang in Skagway or on the White Pass trail. So a *Vigilance Committee* was organized and at one of their meetings one night they put Frank Reed at the gate to keep Soapy and the members of his gang out.

"As soon as Soapy heard of the meeting he took his shootin' irons and went over to it where Reed promptly refused to admit him. Came two simultaneous pistol shots; Soapy fell dead and Reed lived for a couple of weeks and then he cashed in. If you go up to the canyon you'll see the graves of both these men in the cemetery there. So you see you can't most always tell by lookin' at a man what is under his vest."

The next morning the boys took the train for White Horse, about a hundred and ten miles



due north at which point they would make connections with a boat on the Yukon River. While the stampeders had toiled up the icy trail of White Pass, their backs breaking under their packs and their hearts breaking under the torture of it all, the boys were now making the trip in a comfortable train of the White Pass and Yukon Railway, the first in Alaska and the Yukon Territory.

"Isn't just exactly like ridin' on the *Twentieth Century*, is it Jack?" observed Bill as the train crept at a snail's pace up to the summit.

Just then the train rounded a curve blasted out of solid rock and they looked straight down a thousand feet into a canyon.

"More like a trip on the *Elevated*," suggested Jack.

Once over the Pass the engineer opened the throttle a little and the train picked up in speed. Then by way of varying the kaleidoscopic changes of scenery the train shot into a tunnel and out of it onto a tremendously high bridge that spans the Skagway River which flows tumultuously over the rocky bottom on its way to the gulf.

A few miles beyond they crossed an old wag-



on road which was being built to connect White Horse with White Pass but the railroad was completed first and took its place. A dozen miles or so farther on they saw some log cabins which the conductor of the train pointed out as having been the center of White Pass City, one of the tented towns that had sprung up during the mad rush to the Klondike, and when it subsided the town vanished.

Then came into view Glacier Gorge and high above it the train sped along its very edge, then wound up a long grade, when spread before them were the Sawtooth Mountains and Dead Horse Gulch.

"Sounds like the name of a dime novel I once read," reflected Bill.

"Why Dead Horse Gulch?" Jack asked the conductor.

"Because when the rush was on in '98 thousands of the pioneers brought their horses with them and so many of them died down there from starvation and overwork that their bodies choked up the gulch.

"See that sheet of water yonder?" he continued, "that's the beginning of Lake Bennet and there the hustling, bustling, town of Bennet



once was. As soon as the gold crowd from Skagway reached this lake they gave up the trail and threw together rafts and craft of every description. They piled their outfits on or in them and then floated down the Yukon River to the Klondike, unless they were drowned first, as many were. You'll be glad to know, boys, the train hesitates twenty minutes at Bennet for victuals," and the boys thought it was high time that it did so.

When this important function was over and they were again on the train it ran along the edge of the lake until the lower end of it was reached where the friendly *con* called "Carcross! Carcross!"

"This town," he told them, "is built on a place where the Indians used to watch for the caribou to cross and this is the cause why of its name."

After a short ride their rail trip—the last they would have for many, many moons—came to an end at White Horse, on the Thirty Mile River. They considered they were playing in great good luck, for the steamboats leave only twice a week for Dawson and one was scheduled to sail that night.



This gave the boys plenty of time to look around White Horse but they saw with eyes dimly for their vision was as blurred by their quest for gold as ever were those who had rushed madly through there in the days of '98.

Bill opined that he "liked White Horse fine as it has two boats a week we can get away on." As a matter of fact it is a lively town for the steamboats take on their supplies here for their down river trips.

The boys walked over to the White Horse Rapids, as the Indians called it after a Finnlander because of his light hair and whom they thought was as strong as a horse, after he had lost his life in its swirling waters. And hundreds of other lives and dozens of outfits were lost in the wild scramble of the early prospectors to get to the gold fields.

But neither Jack nor Bill gave more than a passing thought to these foolhardy and adventurous souls who had risked and lost all in their futile attempts to get to the Klondike; much less did they think of those who had made the golden goal and won out in the finality of their efforts, for the boys' own scheme consumed every moment of their time, and all of



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their energies were directed upon the consummation of it since they were gold seekers just as truly as were any of those who had gone before.

The steamboat *Selkirk*, which was to carry the boys from White Horse to Circle City, was of the old time kind that was used on the Mississippi and other rivers half a century ago; that is, it was of the wood-burning, stern paddle-wheel type.

As they stood out on deck the next morning Jack tried to lose sight of the big issue for the moment and he imagined himself to be the first explorer who had traced the Yukon River in this region. If he had not had gold on the brain it would have been an easy thing to do for here were the same virgin meadows, primeval forests and silent fastnesses just as they were when the Russians laid claim to Alaska. And the gold, he reasoned, that was here then is, for the greater part, here now.

Not once since they had left Seattle had Bill compared anything with his Noo York, at least not out loud, but when they were passing through the headwaters of the Yukon he said as though he was talking to himself, "It hasn't



got anything on the *Spuyten Duyvil*," which, let me elucidate, is a tidal channel that connects the Harlem River with the Hudson River and so forms the northern boundary of Manhattan Island on which New York City proper is built. But in the eight hundred and sixty odd mile trip down the Yukon to Circle City Bill had ample opportunity to amend his snap comparison and even then he was fifteen hundred miles from its many channeled delta where it flows into the Bering Sea.

"Doesn't look much like the naked north or frozen regions that the folks back home think it is," remarked Bill, as they passed a *tundra* (pronounced toon'-dra) which was thick with grass and shrubs and sprinkled with various plants in flower.

"I'll say it doesn't," replied Jack, "but wait, we haven't run into winter weather yet."

As the boat plied its way softly and swiftly down the Yukon they saw occasional Indian villages, the men taking life easy, the children playing and the squaws busy drying the golden salmon on poles set in the sun. Then to the great delight of both boys they saw a caribou swim out from the shore intending, probably,



to cross to the other side, but frightened by the modernity of the throbbing, smoking monster he swam back faster than he came, and on gaining the shore he disappeared from view.

Another time Bill went over to Jack, who was talking with some passengers, and saluting as to an officer he said, "I have to report, sir, a bear on the starboard bow." And sure enough there stood a huge bear high on the ledge of a rock and so motionless was he that he seemed carved out of the rock itself; but inwardly he was fully alive to this mechanical invasion of his eminent domain.

Never was a river trip of such wild beauty, so full of interest and yet such soothing quiet as this one the boys were now making and it would have proved doubly delightful if they had been pleasure seekers instead of gold seekers. The only breaks in the continuity of the run were made when the boat nosed its way along a bank and, finding an anchorage, she *wooded up*, that is she took on wood to be burned under her boilers.

Now the river widened and the boat ran into the more placid waters of Lake LeBarge which Jack pointed out to Bill as having been the



scene of action in *The Cremation of Sam McGee*, a poem by Robert Service. On reaching the lower end of the lake the boat shot down the Thirty Mile River where the swift current winds forth and back like a tangled rope and it takes a pilot who knows his trade to hold her to the channel.

But the most exciting piece of navigation is at Five Finger Rapids, for here the river narrows down into a neck and almost closing the latter are five ugly finger-like rocks projecting above the surface with the water swirling swiftly round them in mighty eddies. It looked to Jack and Bill as if there was not enough room for the boat to pass between any two of them but this didn't seem to worry the pilot any who held her nose hard toward the middle finger.

The boys thought that he must be tired of life. But hold there matey, just as they had timed her to strike the rock he bore down hard on his wheel to port and the boat missed the rock by the skin of its teeth. Their hearts dropped back from their throats to their thoraxes again and they believed they still stood a fair chance of finding the gold they were after.

And now comes Dawson into view—Dawson



in the heart of the Klondike—the Dawson of tradition, adventure, romance and—of gold! This is the identical town where that great army of pioneer gold seekers, who braved the rigors of the winters, the dangers of the rapids, the stresses of starvation and the robbers of Soapy Smith's gang, found themselves if they were unfortunate enough to be so fortunate.

As the steamboat ties up here for half a day to load and unload its cargo the boys went on a hike over to an Indian village called *Moosehide*, a little way down the trail from Dawson. On returning to town they got the *borry*, as Bill called it, of a couple of horses and rode out eight or ten miles where some great dredges were at work bringing up the sand and gravel from the streams and hydraulicking equipments were washing the gold out of it.

“This kind of mining,” Jack said to his partner, “is simply panning out gold on a big scale by machinery, and gold fields that are not rich enough to be worked profitably by a prospector will yield gold on a paying basis where hydraulicking can be taken advantage of.”

“It's too slow a game for me,” was Bill's



idea of the scheme, "I wants to pick it up in chunks."

"That's what we're here for," Jack made answer.

They left Dawson that evening and the next morning still found them in the Yukon Territory, but shortly after breakfast the boat crossed the International boundary line and they were on good old U. S. soil again. The boat soon made a landing at Eagle City where Fort Egbert is located and the first thing Jack spied was a big wireless station which he knew belonged to the U. S. Army.

From Eagle to Circle City, or just *Circle* as it is called for short, is a sail of a hundred and ninety miles. Both Jack and Bill were dead tired of traveling and they hailed Circle as heartily as they would have hailed their own home town. But they didn't know what they were hailing. The only outstanding fact with them was that they had *arrived*, or at any rate they had gone as far as trains and boats could carry them toward the goal of their desires. The bridge was swung ashore and they got off without delay. The whistle blew a couple of



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sonorous blasts, and the boat backed off and went on her way down stream.

In the days of the gold rush Circle had been the great outfitting town in these parts. It was built up entirely of log cabins and it had more log cabins than any town had ever gathered together before or since. Why Circle City? Whence the name? Because when the town was started it was believed to be located right on the Arctic Circle but later it was learned that it was a good eighty miles below the Circle.

As the boys stepped ashore they were greeted by a few white men, some Indians and the ear-splitting howls of the huskies.

"I tell you Bill, we're on the very edge of things."

"You said a mouthful, pard," was that worthy's sober reply.



## CHAPTER IV

### WHEN BILL AND BLACK PETE MET

**T**HE boys were sorely disappointed in Circle for while it had been, as they had heard, "the largest log house town in the world," and as far as log houses go it was yet, for that matter, still that essential moving principle that makes up a town, namely the inhabitants, was lacking.

But times have changed since the early '90's and now all that remain of its population are a few men who look after the stores and a handful of prospectors, miners, hunters and trappers who come into town to buy their supplies, and these hearten it up a bit. As for the empty log houses they serve only as so many monuments to commemorate the time when the town was alive and full of action.

You ask why the town died out? I'll tell you. Gold was discovered there in 1894 and for the next four years its growth was phenom-



enal—the wonder of all Alaska; but when the Klondike was opened up the inhabitants left everything behind them and made a mad rush for the new gold fields, and so at the present time there is little left to tell of the glory that was Circle's.

The way Jack had figured it out coming up on the boat was that they would get their clothes, grub, sleds and dogs at Circle, which prospectors and others he had talked with said they could do, and then when they were all fixed and winter had set in they would push on over to the land of the Yeehats and there establish a base from which they could work.

This base of supplies was to be like the hub of a great wheel the circumference of which would include all of the territory to be prospected and their local expeditions would be like the spokes, that is they would strike out with their dog teams, traveling light, taking a new line of direction each trip they made. In this way they could, he said, make a thorough search for the hidden gold that those before them had struck so rich but which for divers reasons best known to those who had sought it had never been gotten out of the country.



His best thought, as he had previously explained in answer to an objection of Bill's, was to make this search during the winter months instead of doing it in summer-time in virtue of the fact that they could then use dog sleds and this would enable them to cover the ground without working themselves to death and do it at a goodly clip besides.

Now, when Bill had set his eyes on the deserted City of Circle he instantly took a violent dislike to it. Having become fairly well posted on the geography of *Ilasker*, as he still persisted in calling it, he concocted the notion that what they should have done was to come up in the early spring and go on by boat to Fort Yukon, which is about eighty-five miles farther on down the river.

From there, he contended, they could have gotten a couple of canoes and paddled up the Porcupine and Big Black Rivers until they were close to where the International boundary line crosses the Arctic Circle. This done, (according to Jack's own reasoning he said), they would be about as near the place where they wanted to make their winter quarters as they could get. But there was no getting away from it, they



were now in Circle with winter fast coming on and it was too late to change the work sheet as previously laid out.

By the time this argument was over, the boys had reached the Grand Palace Hotel, an enormous log building of two stories of the regulation kind to be found in all frontier and mining towns.

Running nearly the length of one side of the hall as they entered it, was a bar with a hotel register on the end nearest the door. At the extreme farther end of the hall a platform had been built up about as high as a man's head, while any number of small round tables covered with worn-out and faded green cloth were strewn about the room.

The owner of the Grand Palace in the days antedating the Klondike rush was Sam Hastings, or *Silent Sam* as he was called, because he never spoke unless he was spoken to and his replies were always pithy and to the point. His face was smooth shaven; he wore a low crowned, narrow brimmed Stetson hat, a rolling collar with a flowing tie, silk shirt with diamond set gold buttons in the cuffs, a Prince Albert coat with a six gun conveniently within reach under



it, doeskin<sup>1</sup> breeches and kid button shoes. Unlike Soapy Smith he was honest, as men of his type went in those days, but like Soapy he died with his button shoes on.

Now let this close-up of Silent Sam fade away and take a look at a snap-shot of Doc Marling, the present owner of the Grand Palace and you will observe a further change that time and circumstances have wrought in Circle.

Doc is a big-headed man and bearded like a couple of pards. He wears a woolen shirt, under which beats a fair to middling heart; his breeches are also woolen tied around his ankles and he has on a pair of deerskin moccasins.

He is no shooter—you could see that the moment you look at him—but it is history up yonder that he once choked a bear to death with his hands alone.

He was the only animated object in the great bare room when the boys walked in and they felt like a couple of mavericks that had been cut out from the herd. No more lonesome place

<sup>1</sup> *Doeskin* is a kind of fine twilled cloth much used in those days for making breeches.



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had either of them ever been in this side of Nyack-on-the-Hudson.

But Doc Marling didn't seem to feel that way, since after being there for twenty odd years perhaps he'd gotten used to it. He invited them to inscribe their names on the hotel register, after which he led the march down the hall—it seemed to the boys as if it was a block long—thence up the stair-way whose well-worn steps showed clearly that Circle had been very much alive in the days of her youth, and then to their room which was altogether too big.

“One thing sure, we'll get in practice here for the long winter that is ahead of us,” reflected Jack philosophically.

“It wouldn't be half-bad if we had a 'phone connection with the *American Consolidated Oil Company* back in Noo York, but where are we? Five thousand miles away and not even a wireless station nearer than Eagle. ‘I blazes!’ as Grizzly Hank down at Juneau says,” grouched Bill. His indisposition was curious in that no matter how strenuous the tide of battle might be he had never a word to say, but inaction always behaved as an irritant to his nervous system.



Came soon the loud jangling of a bell and they knew it for a call to supper. They followed where it led and sat down to their first meal in Circle, and it was good. There were ten or a dozen men at the table with them and up here at the very outpost of civilization, where men are what they are, they all fell into loud and easy conversation.

"We're in the hands of white men, as I said we'd be, back there in New York," Jack told his partner when they were again in their room.

Just as they were about to turn in they thought they heard a phonograph going, and as "music hath charms to sooth the savage breast" they went down into the big hall to be soothed.

While in pre-Klondike days it was of nightly occurrence to find four or five hundred people gathered in the hall, there were now congregated perhaps some twenty-five or thirty men, and these were made up of Americans, French-Canadians, Indians, half-breeds, and a Chinaman or two, to say nothing of the bear.

A few of those who composed this agglomeration of humanity, were the scum of the earth but most of them were men of strong character



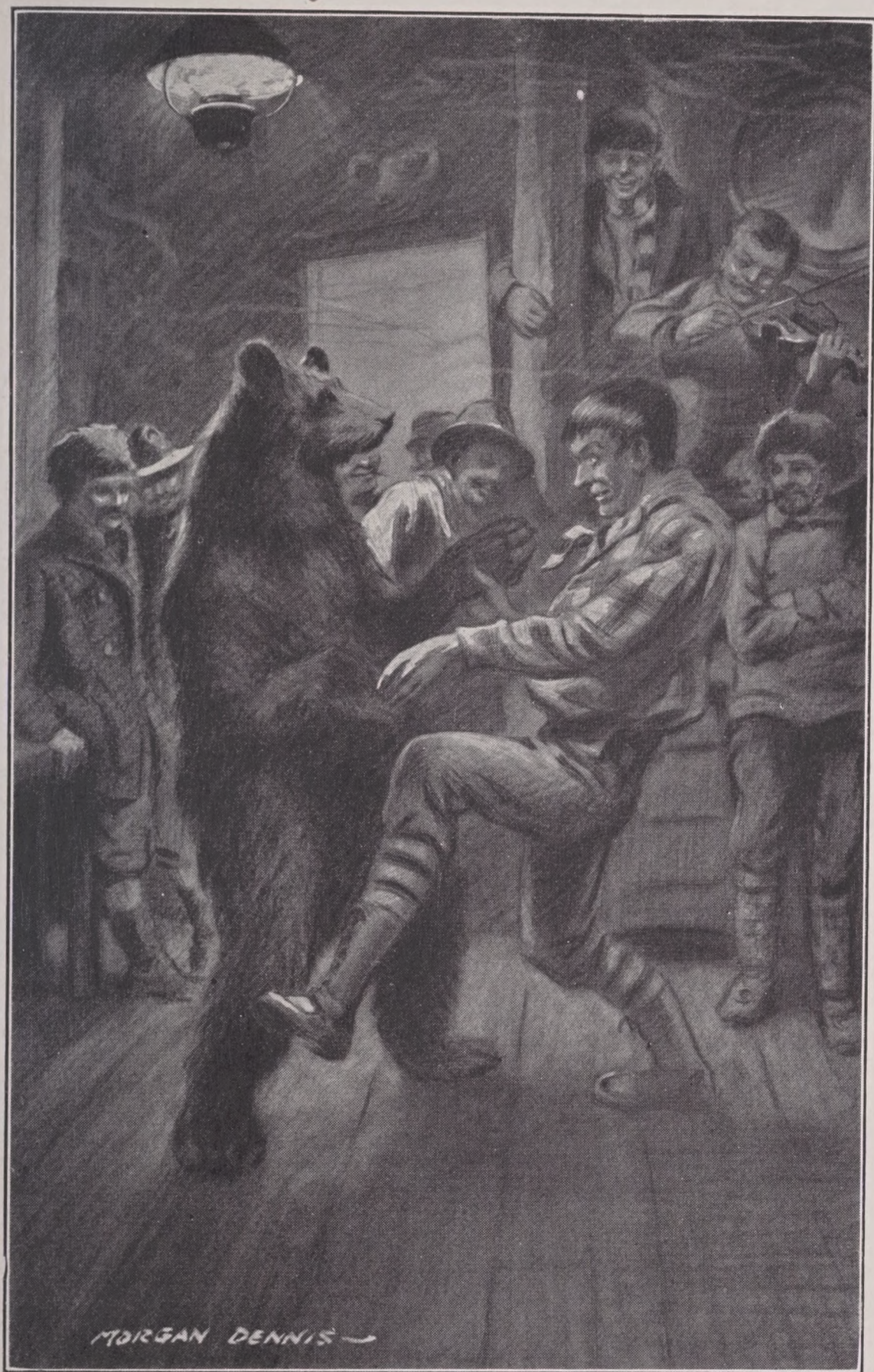
and sterling worth. Considering that they were on the very edge of things they were bound to be a rough and ready lot but taken all in all they were well behaved and peaceably inclined—all except one and he was Black Pete.

While the crowd by no means filled the void of the big hall, still it breathed enough of life into the stagnated atmosphere to take off the sharp edges of their lonesomeness.

Now instead of a phonograph they discovered that the source of the music originated in a tall, rangy miner with a big bushy mustache, who was sitting on the platform and sawing away on a fiddle as if his whole soul was in it. Near the platform some kind of a disturbance was going on around which the onlookers had formed themselves into a ring. Whatever it was they were greatly interested and from the roars of laughter they were evidently enjoying it hugely.

Jack and Bill elbowed their way deep enough into the ring to see what the frolic was and what they saw they concluded was about as good as an act in a side-show. In a word it was a team of dancers executing with great precision and solemnity the “bear-trot”, or “bear-hug”, or “bear-something-or-other”, for a young French-





"IT WAS A TEAM OF DANCERS."

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Canadian and a big brown bear, who stood erect on his hind legs, when he was as tall as his keeper, were executing a most ludicrous, albeit, a lumbering sort of dance.

After a spell Rip Stoneback, the fiddler, ceased scraping the catgut strings with his horse-hair bow and the trainer and his bear wound up their exhibition with a wrestling bout that tickled the everlasting daylights out of these simple northmen, from which it could be fairly deduced that, after all, they were really only boys "growed" up.

The boys mingled freely with the knots of men taking in what they had to say about everything in general and little things in particular, for it was all brand-new and novel to them. Jack struck up a conversation with a young fellow named Jim Wendle from 'Frisco who had staked a claim over on Preacher Creek.

"The boys here are all right," he was saying to Jack, "there's only one fellow who is really hard boiled and that's Black Pete over there. He's laid out every man he's ever tackled, either with his fists, or his knife and I've heard that he shot a man once. He's meaner than all get out when he's had a few drinks so don't get into



any argument with him. Agree to anything he says if he talks to you."

Black Pete did not look the part of a "bad man" though his face was hard and his complexion was swarthy. He was not very tall, had tremendous shoulders and having lived in the open Northland all his life he knew the run of men who gathered here. He was thoroughly disliked in Circle because of this disposition on his part to always want to pick a fight and there were men thereabouts who were actually afraid of him.

At about the same time that Jack was getting his information concerning Black Pete another prospector was tipping off his history to Bill and it was lucky for both of the boys that they were "let in" on his past performances when they were.

Black Pete and a boon companion were leaning against the bar when the latter made some passing remark about that young stripling and his partner who had just landed in Circle.

"Sleem keed heem all right," returned Pete, "but I no got use for heem pardner—zat fellow weez da cut cross hees cheek. I give heem beeg leeking sometime. Maybe theese night. Watch



a meenute. I have som' fun with sleem keed." Black Pete called to Jack and motioned him to come over, but as the latter had not been introduced he paid no attention and this aroused Black Pete's ire. Then he and his companion started over toward Jack and Jim Wendle.

"Be careful now," his friend cautioned him.

Black Pete laid his hand on Jack's shoulder in a perfectly friendly like manner and said:

"You and Jeem com' heeva dreenk weeth me."

At that Jack got up from the table and looked Black Pete square in the eye.

"I don't drink," he said shortly.

Black Pete was mad clear through, that much was plain.

Bill who had been taking a hand in a world-old game called *poker*, happened to see Jack and Black Pete facing each other and he divined trouble. He laid down his cards and went over where his pardner and the bad un were, to *listen in* on the conversation.

"Heeve a seegar, then," the Canuk insisted catching hold of Jack's arm and pulling him toward the bar.

Taking a firm hold on Black Pete's wrist



Jack removed his hand from his arm and said, without the slightest inflexion in his voice, "I don't smoke."

Then the unexpected happened—that which had not happened in Circle in perhaps a dozen or twenty years before.

"You don't eh?" growled Black Pete, infuriated at Jack's cold refusal to join him in either one or the other, "then deem you, heeve a bullet!"

At the same time he whipped out his six-shooter and pulled the trigger, but his marksmanship was bad, for Bill had caught him by throat from the side and pulled his body over so that the bullet crashed through the roof, instead of boring a hole through Jack's body.

Expecting that the remaining chambers would be emptied in the struggle which took place between Bill and Black Pete the crowd dropped to the floor, jumped behind the bar, crawled under tables—all except René and he kept his trained bear between himself and the business end of the gun the bad man of Circle and the Harlem boy were struggling for.

These latter two were well matched though there was no doubt but that Black Pete who was



the larger was also the stronger, but sheer brute strength could not gain the mastery where the tricks of the wrestler's art are brought to bear and Bill had a little the best of it.

As the crowd rightly guessed when the first shot was fired, Black Pete did pull the trigger every chance he got until all of his cartridges were shot off but each time the bullet that was intended for Bill went wild and neither he nor the others were scratched. One bullet, though, shivered the big plate glass mirror over the bar into a thousand pieces and Doc Marling, the proprietor knew that he was having bad luck just then to the jig-time of three hundred dollars, even if it didn't keep on for the next seven years.

All the time the struggle was under way Jack stood by as though he was watching a friendly bout in Prof. William Adam's Academy on Manhattan Street in the good old days. More than one of the onlookers wondered why he didn't crack a bottle on Black Pete's head and so help out his partner, but this was not the way the boys did team work. In a set-to of any kind whether it was with bare knuckles, with knives or with pistols neither one would take a hand in



the affair the other was engaged in unless, as Jack had once explained to me, it was "absolutely imperative."

And this status of the fray was far from having come to pass, at least that was the way Jack sized it up. The crowd must have kept count of the shots fired for when the last one took place they quickly picked themselves up from the floor, or crawled out from their safety-first hiding places, and gathered around Bill and Black Pete who were still at it.

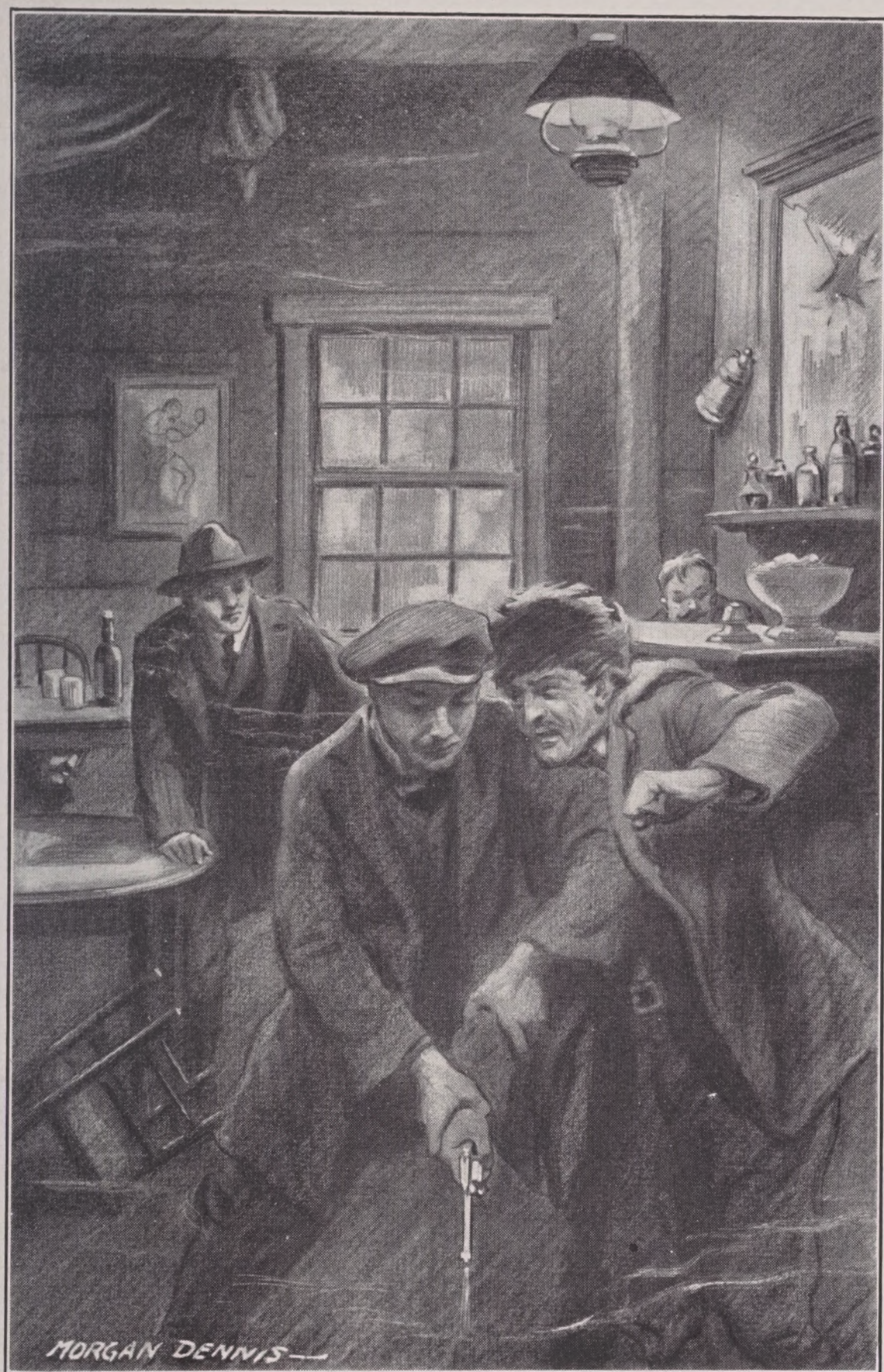
Whether it was due to the final breaking down of his courage, failing strength, too much hootch or the superior tactics of the trained athlete, was not apparent, but slowly Bill overpowered his opponent, threw him over his shoulder, when he struck the floor on his back, and pinned him down so that he could not move. After all had seen that Black Pete was helpless Bill let him up.

There was wild cheering for the victor and some one brought Bill a big glass of forty-rod.

"You have well earned it boy and you need it," he said as he offered the glass to him.

"I never drink," said Bill and it was given instead to Black Pete to revive him again.





"BLACK PETE DID PULL THE TRIGGER EVERY CHANCE HE GOT."

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“When the latter had regained his feet, and recovered from the shock a little, he offered no explanation for his defeat, but in his deep humiliation he moved over toward the door to make as dignified an exit as he could in the quickest possible time.

“Hey, where are youse goin’,” Bill called out after him. “Come back here and sit down at this table and let’s be friends, for I never holds a grudge after I have downed me man. Sit down here, I wants to tell youse something.”

Black Pete reluctantly did as Bill requested and the crowd surged round them to hear what it was this boy from down under had to say to him.

“I takes it you’re a bit loaded with lickor to-night and perhaps I had the ’vantage of youse for I never lets any of that hootch stuff interfere with me *phys-e-que*, see? Now you think you’re some scrapper don’t you? Well maybe you are, and I’ll give you a fair chanst. Tomorrer youse keep away from the bug-juice, see? and come ’round in de evenin’ and I’ll spar’ a few rounds with youse—tree rounds ull be about enough—just a friendly bout for the sport it will give these gents here. Marquis



Queensbury rules or sluggers rules, I don't care which. Youse can go now," and Black Pete promptly sneaked off wishing that an earthquake would open a gulch through Circle and swallow up him, Bill, Jack and everybody else, but it didn't.

All the next day Black Pete wondered how he could get out of the 'friendly bout' that Bill was so willing to *pull off* for the mere fun of the thing. He didn't know what the Marquis of Queensbury rules were but he finally came to the conclusion that he was a better man than his opponent and that the only way he could retrieve his standing in Circle was to give the *Keed* the beating of his life.

Curiously enough he did 'cut out the booze' just as though he had paid Bill for the advice and then he proceeded to get into his best fighting trim.

"I knock heem face een eef I ever heet heem," he said talking to himself, and then to prove to his own satisfaction that he could do it he made four well defined dents in the pine board wall with a smashing blow of his fist.

"An' you said these folks up here was all of the peace-lovin' garden variety, and never use



a gun," Bill said soberly when they were in their room after the fracas.

"I thought they were," replied Jack.

"You *thought* they were?" and Bill looked at him as though he had caught him breaking the n<sup>th</sup> commandment. "Well don't youse think again, Buddy, or youse might hurt yourself, see?"



## CHAPTER V

### OUTFITTING AT CIRCLE

IN the great hall everything was as quiet as the faces on the totem poles that reared their ugliness into the air on either side of the Grand Palace Hotel. While the night before had been the most exciting of any that the oldest pioneers of Circle could remember since the days of '94, in the broad light of the morning after, it seemed as though "the makin's of it had just melted away," as Bill expressed it.

The boys found Doc Marling in the 'office' of his hotel which meant that he was standing back of the register and ink-bottle. He greeted his paying guests mournfully and when Jack inquired what he had on his young mind that grieved him he pointed to the frame-work which had held the largest mirror north of Dawson so short a time before as yesterday. It only went to prove how fragile are mirrors and the mutability of things in general.



“My lookin’-glass is busted,” he said funeral-like, “and I’m out just three hundred cold dollars in gold.”

“I don’t see how you could blame us because a patron of yours thought he’d let daylight through me. Black Pete started it and it’s up to you to make him settle for it,” suggested Jack.

“He hasn’t got anything to settle with; that’s the worst part of it,” he replied, fishing.

“Then you orter take it gentle-like outen his hide.” This from Bill.

“Well, I kinda allowed that you about did that thing last night,” said Doc, “and bein’ somewhat of a philosopher I allowed too that while the glass was worth three hundred dollars it was worth well nigh that amount in gold dust to see him take his medicine.”

“That’s a pleasant way to look at it, Mr. Marling, and now,” said Jack, “we want you to tell us which of these stores here is the best place to buy our outfit.”

“They’re all all right. But you ought to go and make the acquaintance of Jack McQuesten over there at the *N. C. (Northern Commercial Company’s)* store. He is the daddy of



Circle for he set up a tradin' post here as soon as the pioneer prospectors begin to come in. Jack's a man that seventeen dog-sleds loaded with moose-hide sacks of gold couldn't budge from the straight and unerrin' path of rectitude, is Jack, and he'll fix you lads up bully and O. K.," he told them.

So the boys went over to the *N. C.*, and while Jack McQuesten's fame had reached them down as far as Skagway, Bill Adams' fame had preceded them that morning from the hotel. The old trader was sitting on a box when they came in and they saw right away that he was a pioneer of the old school. A low, broad brimmed hat, without a dent or crease in it, set squarely on his head, and a pair of keen gray eyes, about half closed as if he didn't want to see too much at a time, was boring holes through them.

He was full-faced, his nose was broad and his mustache gray; it was plain to be seen why he had been entrusted with hundreds of thousands of dollars by the various companies whose trading posts were famous all over Alaska. He was, as Doc Marling had said, as straight as a die and he knew character, even



as characters knew him. He was dressed like a miner and the only outstanding feature of his rig that the boys caught sight of was a magnificent gold watch chain and charm—and he had a watch to match them in his pocket—which had been presented to him by the *Order of Pioneers*, for of the first of the hardy pioneers of Alaska, he was the very first.

“Mr. McQuesten,” began Jack, “we came over to get a winter’s supply of grub and an outfit fit for an arctic expedition.”

Jack McQuesten took a good look at Bill and said with a twinkle in his eye, “so you are the young chap that whipped Black Pete—well I’ll be dog-goned. But let me give you a pointer, be careful how you handle him for his ways are not our ways—and we can’t be responsible for them. It’s the first time in the history of Circle he has not done up his man and he isn’t any too particular how he does it, so watch out he doesn’t knife you.”

“We’ll be careful all right, from now on, Mr. McQuesten, believe me,” returned Bill.

“He’s out of his latitude,” put in Jack—that is Jack Heaton; “he ought to be ashamed of himself living up here on the Arctic Circle



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with white people instead of being down there on the Tropic of Cancer with the rest of the *greasers*."

"If he pulls any of that *Chilili Mex* stuff on me to-night I'll send him so far he'll need a weegie board to get back to earth on, but I'm thankin' you Mister McQuesten for tellin' me as how I should be careful, sir," Bill said in an apologetic voice, perhaps because he had let Black Pete off so easily the night before.

"Now to get down to business, Mr. McQuesten," began Jack who was anxious to get things a-moving. "What we want is an outfit of clothes, mess-gear and grub that will carry us through the winter. We're not going so far away but what we expect to get back before the *last ice* and *first water* but we might want to keep on going and we must have an outfit so that we can pull through if needs be."

"What you want is an outfit for about eight months but you couldn't begin to pack it on your backs or haul it on sleds," the old outfitter explained; "such an outfit would weigh in the neighborhood of eight hundred or a thousand pounds, and a man can't carry more than fifty pounds or haul more than one hundred pounds



on a stretch. What you ought to have is a couple of dog-sleds."

"Perzactly!" agreed Bill, "and the question now is can we get the dogs."

"There are some very likely dogs in and around Circle that I might be able to pick up for you and I'll see the men who own them over at the Palace to-night. I'll go ahead and outfit you on the strength of your being able to get the dogs."

"Good!" ejaculated Jack.

"First of all the things you'll wear," the old trader struck out genially and his eyes twinkled more merrily than ever for here was big business staring him in the face—a volume of it such as he had not transacted since the palmy days of Circle these many years ago.

The boys were all attention.

"You'll want a couple of suits of waterproof underwear, a Mackinaw coat and breeches for early winter and spring; a caribou skin coat with the fur on which has a hood fixed to it; a pair of moosehide or bearskin breeches, a couple of pairs of moccasins and *muk-luks* apiece and about a dozen pairs of German sox."

"Whoa, Buddy," sang out Bill, "I wouldn't



wear a pair o' them Boche socks if I had to go barefoot, see?"

"That's only the name of them, boy; why they make them down there in Dawson," explained Mr. Jack, the storekeeper.

"Well, I might wear 'em in a pinch then," said Bill.

"Then you must have fur mittens that are lined with wool; several pairs of woolen mittens to wear when you are building your log cabin, heavy fur caps and fur lined sleeping bags. Of course there will be towels and handkerchiefs and all of that sort of small stuff."

As the storekeeper enumerated the various items of clothing, he brought them forth and laid out two piles, one for each of the boys.

"Now let me tell you something about taking care of these fur clothes; if you expect them to last you for more than a month take my advice and keep them dry, or if they do get wet, don't wait but stop where you are, build a fire and dry them then and there. I don't care how low the *quicks* falls you can't get cold in one of these suits.

"Oh, yes; I almost forgot your eye shades but they are absolutely necessary in traveling



over the snow on bright days," and he produced a queer looking pair of goggles without any glasses in them. "These are Esquimo shades and I wouldn't give a cent for any other kind," he said as he handed the boys a pair.

They examined them closely and found that they were made of wood and where the lenses were supposed to be in a pair of goggles there were thin pieces of wood instead with a couple of slits in them to let the light through. Jack and Bill put them on and made puns and had fun over and out of them. Jack pretended he was a college *prof* and then gave an imitation of Teddy Roosevelt. Not to be outdone, Bill gave an imitation of Jack giving an imitation of him, and then he wound up by pretending he was Judge Gilhooley of the Harlem Police Court and promptly sentenced himself to pay a fine of seven dollars and twenty-three cents for falsely (or badly) impersonating *Hizzoner*.

Jack McQuesten laughed at their antics until his sides ached and the boys laughed too, and altogether Circle wasn't such a bad town as they had painted it.

"You'll take these eye shades more seriously when you have to use them and you'll thank



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your Uncle Jack for giving them to you, for they leave no bad after effects as glass goggles do when you take them off.

“Next comes the hardware,” he went on explaining as he had to a thousand, yes ten thousand, *tenderfeet*, in the past, and he thoroughly enjoyed living over again those golden days. “I call everything hardware that you can’t eat, wear, use for medicine, hunt or fish with, except the dogs.

“You’ll need quite a lot of hardware including snowshoes and sleds, a wall tent, tarpaulins and compasses, for traveling. For building your cabin you will want a five-foot cross-cut saw, a rip and a hand saw, an ax, hammer and some other carpenter tools, besides nails, hinges, rivets and such like traps.

“For cooking a folding sheet-iron stove, pans, coffee pot, tin plates, cups, knives, forks and spoons. You say you’ve got a good single barrelled repeating shotgun and a hunting knife apiece? You must take along plenty of loaded shells and I will fix up all of the fishing tackle you want. For your prospecting outfit you must take a prospector’s pick and a miner’s pick with a steel point, a shovel with a round



point such as we use up here, a magnet, a few pounds of quicksilver, a gold pan, a small gold scale to weigh your winnings on and a magnifying glass.

“And now for the grub. This will include flour, corn-meal, yeast in cakes and baking powder; evaporated fruits, potatoes, onions and vegetables; sugar and saccharin tablets; ham, bacon and salt pork; about a hundred pounds of Alaska strawberries and hardtack for emergency rations, also a lot of pemmican for the same purpose; some tea, coffee and condensed milk, soap and oleomargarine; salt and pepper, and a few other little things I shall not forget to put in. You have a medicine case? What have you got in it?” he asked, for Jack McQuesten had taken a great interest in these two ‘down east’ boys and he intended to see that they had enough of everything and the right kind of things—that is if they ever started.

Jack told him it had bottles containing quinine pepsin, cathartic pills, calomel and migrain.

“No drug kit is complete up here unless you have arnica for stiff joints and strained muscles and boracic acid for blistered and aching feet.”

The old trader was in no hurry to get the



outfit together that day for he knew there was going to be a fight to the finish in the evening and knowing Black Pete better than he cared to and not knowing Bill Adams at all, he allowed that, like as not, the boys wouldn't need anything further unless it was one or two spruce boxes.

"Looks to me as if Mr. Jack is tryin' to sell us his store and is goin' off to new diggin's," yawped Bill when he looked over the list Jack had made as the storekeeper called off the items. "An' what's the quicksilver for anyway—to fill up the thermometer tube when the bottom drops out o' it?"

Jack laughed at his pal's little joke. "No, to dissolve out the gold when we find it in quartz."

"I suppose we'll have to take it and pay for it and all them other prospectin' tools just to make things look regular, but we'll throw them away as soon as we gets outer sight. We're after gold in sacks, not in handfuls," said Bill. "Why man alive it 'ud take a freight car to transport all the stuff he's goin' to sell us; and besides, think o' the skads o' spondulicks we're goin' to have to cough up fer it all, too."



“You must remember that we’ve got to live all winter, Bill, and McQuesten knows just what he’s about.”

“An’ what’s them Alaska strawberries?—a hundred pounds o’ them!—he must think we’re goin’ to a Fourth Ward Picnic or a strawberry festible. Do you know Jack I’m goin’ to have some o’ them night-bloomin’ strawberries for supper if I has to tip that slant-eyed, Hong-Kong cook at the hotel a four bit piece.

“I suppose you’ve eaten *pemmican*, haven’t you Bill?”

“I’ve eaten most everything from *chicken-à-la-King* with youse at the Ritz-Carlton to a pair o’ old rubber boots when I was shipwrecked at sea. It seems to me I’ve heard that word *pemmican* somewhere afore in my bright log-book o’ youth, but I can’t say as how I ever sat down to a *table-de-hoty* dinner where it was served and that I knew I was partakin’ of it at the same time. Explain it to me and maybe I’ll remember it by the way it smells.”

“Pemmican,” began Jack, “is like Irish stew, Hungarian goulash, chop-suey or *chili-con-carne* in that there is a general recipe for making it. But cooks take even more liberties than poets;



consequently no two brands of pemmican are made the same, and, hence, cannot taste, or smell, alike, but the two things that all of them have in common are filling and staying qualities for either man or dog.

“Pemmican is usually made of meat ground up and grease added to it when it is cooked, and some makers put pea-flour and other vegetable ingredients into it to make it cheap. A pound of it will not fill a cup and you can eat it every meal without getting tired of it. We used great lots of it—in fact almost lived on it—when I went on that Arctic expedition, and we fed it to the dogs too.

“Rear Admiral Peary had his pemmican made to order to get the full food value out of it; his recipe called for lean beef ground fine, two thirds part, and this was mixed with beef fat, one third part, to which was added a little sugar and some raisins. The pemmican for the dogs is made of cats, dogs, horses or any other kind of meat that is cheap. What this pemmican is like that we are going to get here I haven't the faintest idea, but it doesn't matter much for we're not going to use it as a steady diet.”



"One thing is sure, other prospectors have et it and what they can eat we can eat if we have to," was Bill's idea of it.

On returning to the hotel Bill took Sing Nook, the Chinese cook to one side, pressed a fifty cent piece into his hand and told him it was his earnest desire to have some Alaska strawberries for his supper by way of a little delicacy.

"Velly welly," returned the celestial dignitary who presided over the joss-house of pots and pans; "I glivee you pleanty Alaska stlawbellies flor slupper." And so that was easily fixed.

When Bill sat down to partake of the rations that evening he waited patiently for the Alaska strawberries to come under his observation; but none materialized as far as his acute judgment of the luscious fruit was concerned. As soon as the meal was over and the diners had dispersed Bill got Sing into a corner and sang him a song without music, but the words of which ran something like this:

"I gave you four bits this afternoon to get me a helpin' o' Alaska strawberries. You took my good money but you failed to deliver the goods. Now what have you got to say for your-



self, you Shanghai colored son of a Pekin pigtail."

"Allee samee I dlid glivee you Alaska stlawbellies flor slupper. You no catchee 'em?" Sing asked very much surprised.

"No, I didn't catchee 'em and if you don't catchee 'em for me right now youse 'ell catchee a couple of 'em in the eye, I'm a thinkin'."

Sing had seen what Bill had done to Black Pete and he had a very wholesome respect for this boy with the "velly badee facee," so he hustled out into the kitchen and was soon back with an enormous bowl of beans, which he set on the table.

"What's this?" questioned Bill sharply.

"Alaska stlawbellies, allee samee you havee tonight for slupper."

"Holy cat!" cried Bill in an awful voice. "I've been stung!"

Sing in the meantime had become very much alarmed over the misunderstanding but when he heard Bill guffawing in appreciation of the joke, he joined in heartily. Bill had learned two things; namely, what Alaskan strawberries are, and that a Chinaman has a sense of humor.



There was a larger gathering of the Northmen in the Grand Palace Hotel that night than there had been since the last election. They came in like spooks at a séance, apparently materialized out of thin air, but unlike the latter, you would have to admit that they looked mighty like hard and fast, flesh and blood human beings; and further they refuse to dematerialize until they had seen what they came forth to see.

As was his wont, Rip Stoneback, who had been prospecting for gold in these parts for the last quarter of a century but whose innumerable disappointments had not affected his musical talent, was on the platform, but he was not fiddling. René and his big brown bear were there too but they were not executing any fancy steps or doing any funny stunts, for the gathering that night were neither interested in the goddess of music, nor of the dance, nor, again, of comedy.

What they were there to see was a man's game that had originated in the primeval world, had been handed down while man was in the process of development, and has since bided in



communities that are far more cultured than Circle. It was the old spirit of the fight that called them and they were there to a man.

The tables, which were always scattered round the hall, where divers and sundry games with the pasteboards were played of an evening, had all been set back against the walls and the chairs piled up around them. Just why Doc Marling had seen fit to move them off the floor was not apparent unless he thought it was going to be a sprinting match instead of a pugilistic contest. There was enough room in the hall for a dozen squared rings.

He had also removed all of the breakable assets to better protected places, his bump of precaution having been enlarged by the unfortunate breaking of his three hundred dollar "lookin'-glass" that was the pride of Circle and the envy of towns up and down the Yukon River for a hundred miles in either direction.

Conversation was being carried on but it was of a tense kind and low, and not at all like the big voiced, open hearted talk that is the way of these free men of the Northland. And all because a seasoned man, but a bully,



was going to do battle with a stripling who hailed from a place they had heard spoken of as New York.

Bill had seen fights, yes, he had had fights ever since he could remember and in later years, as a member of the *Harlem Athletic Club*, he had watched some friendly bouts of give and take and had himself participated in so many battles that the fact he was going to fight Black Pete had no more effect on him than if he had been going to spar with Jack.

Black Pete was in a different mood. He too had had his fights but they were far between and rough and tumble ones at that with men who, like himself, knew nothing about the science of the game, and usually he came out on top. Failing in this he had used his knife on men who downed him, and once he shot a man. A bully sooner or later, though, will meet his match and when Black Pete met Bill he was scheduled for a K. O. (knockout).

At nine o'clock, or thereabouts, the proprietor walked over to the place where the bout was to be pulled off and made this announcement:

“We have with us to-night Black Pete,



champeen all round pugilist of Alaska and Bill Adams, the New York Kid, in a friendly bout and may the best man win.”

Black Pete came on to the center of the floor full of dash and dog. Then Bill came on and held out his hand but Black Pete refused to shake, so Bill shook hands with himself, just like that. Evidently Pete was not going to fight according to approved ring rules. Instead he swung a vicious right hander at Bill's head. Bill ducked it and laughed and he knew his man was slow.

Then by sparring and feinting he drew from Pete rights and lefts with the force of a sledgehammer back of them but which Bill side-stepped or ducked. It was not long before Pete showed signs of getting tired of hitting the air. As Pete had told himself, if he could ever hit Bill he would smash in his face; the power was back of his blows all right but the trouble was that Bill wouldn't stand still long enough to let him do it.

Bill, who was as lithe and nimble on his feet as a cat, was everywhere around his opponent at once and kept him on the go following his tactics. Then Bill must have gotten care-



less for Black Pete gave him a wallop on the jaw that sent him whirling a dozen feet. Now for the first time Pete's friends egged him on and yelled "give it to him again."

Then Pete, encouraged by his luck, rushed Bill, but he was not to be caught napping again. He warmed up to his work and tapped Pete on the nose, making it bleed, on the jaw, making it hurt, in the mouth, making it swell and in the eye making it black; in fact he hit him any and everywhere he wanted to and so fast did he hammer him that Pete got bewildered and began to strike out in every direction in the hope that some of his blows would land on his enemy's anatomy, and so another did. It was a glancing blow and scraped Bill's cheek so hard it nearly ripped the knife scar open.

"Wind him up Bill," called out Jack.

"All right," his partner answered, and with that he gave Pete one of his famous 'ospital punches and he went to the floor in a heap.

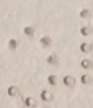
Jack went over to Pete and slowly counted ten and as he still failed to show any signs of intelligence he counted him out. Pete's friends carried him over to a corner where he came too a half hour later and then they put him to



bed. He had had "a yard and a half over plenty," as Bill would say.

Rip sawed away again on his fiddle, Doc put the tables back on the floor, René danced and wrestled with his good-natured bear and the men played cards again, but no one asked Bill or Jack to have a drink, a cigar or a bullet as long as they were in Circle. I dare say that the veriest tenderfoot can now go into the Grand Palace Hotel and he will be treated as considerately as he would in the Waldorf-Astoria, in New York, the Blackstone in Chicago or the Palace in San Francisco.

The next morning after the bout Black Pete lit out for other diggings and he has never been seen in Circle since. In this primitive way then are bad breeds often made into better men.





## CHAPTER VI

### MUSH, YOU HUSKIES, MUSH

**W**HEN pioneer Jack McQuesten saw Bill deliver the final blow that knocked Black Pete out he knew he was safe in going ahead with the boys' outfit. He also made it known that very night that they were in the market to buy some dogs, that nothing but the best would be good enough for them and that he himself would pick them out. The result was that within the next two or three days there was quite a bunch of dogs in Circle, enough I should say to make up half-a-dozen dog-teams.

"How many dogs do you reckon we'll need to haul our outfit?" Bill wanted to know.

"What do you say, Mr. McQuesten?" Jack put it up to the storekeeper.

"You could get along with five or six dogs to the team, but seven will give you much better service and besides, if any thing should happen



to any of them, you would be in no danger of getting stuck."

"It's better to have too many than too few," said Jack Heaton.

Then they went out and took a look at the dogs and they were of all the kinds used in Alaska. Among the lot that were offered the boys were some genuine Eskimo dogs or *malamutes* as they are called, a number of *huskies*, which are a mixture of various breeds of dogs that have been brought into Alaska, with the native Indian dogs; a few *Siwash*, or common Indian dogs and the rest were *outside* dogs of various breeds.

"It's like buyin' a necktie in a department store—any of 'em would do but when you see 'em all together you don't know which one you like the best," confided Bill. Now if they was hawses——"

"Leave it to me Bill," broke in Jack; "it's been a month of Sundays since I've had anything to do with dogs and dog teams but I'll pick out the best of the bunch with Mr. McQuesten's help. The malamute was the only kind of dog we used in the Arctic and we'll buy all of



them there are here—what, only four?—not enough for even one team. Can't you get us three more of these malamutes, Mr. McQuesten, so that we'll have at least one team of them?" asked Jack.

"These are all that I know about. It's a great day when you see any one with a matched team of any kind of dogs. The husky is just as good a dog, or better for these parts, and there are five of them. You'll have to make out with outside dogs for the others." Then he whispered in Jack's ear, "I wouldn't take any of those Indian dogs if I was you, for they are the worst kind of thieves and will keep your teams in bad blood all of the time. But I will say they are good work dogs."

"You're in the know, Mr. McQuesten, and I'll take your tip," replied Jack.

This buying of dogs was an entirely new phase of business to Bill and he took in every word that the pair of Jacks, by which I mean Messrs. McQuesten and Heaton, were saying and to the remarks, arguments and laudations that the owners of the various dogs made and were having by and between themselves. It



must be admitted that Bill stood at the foot of the pass when it came to knowing anything about these work dogs.

“Tell me this, Jack,” Bill whispered so that no one might learn of his profound ignorance, “what’s the diff’ ’tween a malamute and a husky?”

“More than there is between a broncho and a mustang, though the dogs of a dog team are always called *huskies*, regardless of the kinds of dogs it is made up of. See those handsome, alert-looking fellows over there with their ears sticking straight up?” Jack nodded toward them; “well, they are the malamutes.

“Their pointed ears are in that position for keeps, their noses are black and as sharp as a collie’s, while they have slitted eyes from which I shouldn’t wonder if the Eskimo got his idea for making his eye shades. Their pointed ears, keen eyes and sharp noses make them look as if they were ready to jump out of their hides. They’re the Ford motors of the Arctic region all right. Their close hair is about the color of a silver fox, and look at their tails! two of them stand up like wireless masts and those of



the other two look as if they had been put over their backs with a curling iron.

"A husky looks a good deal like a malamute, for his ears are pointed too, but instead of being fixed in an upright position he can move them, so every once in a while you'll notice he will let them drop. He doesn't stand one, two, three though with the malamute for beauty."

"McGargle over there says that dog drivers up here will take a husky anytime before they'd take a malamute. How do you make that out?"

"I make it out because McGargle has a couple of huskies he wants to sell. We'll ask McQuesten anyway," said Jack.

"I've just had a argument with my pard," Bill said to the storekeeper as big as though he had all the inside information that is known about dogs," and he says that the malamutes are the best and I says that the huskies are the best. Now what do you say?"

"Yes, huskies are supposed to be a little better workers for the kind of sledding we do in this part of the country, but speaking for myself I prefer the malamute because the snow doesn't stick between his toes as easily and his



feet are harder. After all it's only a matter of choice and usually what you can get. Both kinds of dogs were made by Almighty God for the work they have to do and they do it well.

“This is true too of the outside dogs; some of them are just as good workers and just as good in every respect as either the malamutes or the huskies. It isn't a question of which dogs are the best any more now than in the days back there when a good dog brought two hundred and fifty, five hundred, yes, even a thousand dollars.” McQuesten shook his head sadly. “But those good old days will never come back again.”

Nearly all the time the boys were looking over the dogs and bartering with their owners for them they made a bedlam of the peace and quiet of Circle with their ear-splitting barking and howling, and Jack asked Bill to observe that it was the malamutes and huskies that did the howling, while the Siwashes and outside dogs did the barking.

“Whenever you find a dog barking, though he may look like a malamute or a husky you will know to a certainty that he is not full blooded



but has some other strain in him," explained Jack.

An Indian had half-a-dozen Siwashes for sale and Bill made it his business to get a line on them. Not knowing, or let us say, forgetting, that the Indian dog has the meanest disposition in the world, Bill held out his hand and snapped his fingers at one of them. As a reward for his kindly notice the dog returned the compliment by snapping savagely at his hand and had he not been tied to a stake and Bill somewhat of an acrobat, the brute would have made a partial meal from the extremity.

"No Siwashes for mine," Bill bellowed; "I wouldn't have a team o' them Indian savages on a bet."

Having selected the dogs they wanted the dickering began in earnest between the boys and the various owners, with McQuesten as referee. They drove some pretty good bargains too, though it just so happened they were favored by a slump in the dog market at that particular time so that dogs that used to fetch a hundred dollars or more they bought for twenty-five dollars or less.



The upshot of it all was that the malamutes and the huskies cost the boys in the neighborhood of twenty-five dollars apiece and the outside dogs from ten to fifteen dollars apiece. The outside dogs included a couple of cross-bred mastiffs, a couple of St. Bernards and a Newfoundland.

The boys paid over the money and got the names of the various dogs, which Jack wrote down, so that they would neither forget them nor get them twisted, for a dog will not respond to any save his own name any quicker than a man will, though he's not so sensitive about it. The owners who had not been fortunate enough to have made sales took their dogs with them and went their way, but not happily for they knew not when Circle would see prospectors like these boys again.

"Now, men, bring the dogs over to the store and we'll hitch them up for the boys," said McQuesten.

"What in thunder to?" Bill wondered, but never a question did he ask.

The men and the boys took a couple of dogs apiece and when they brought up at the store McQuesten went in and in a few minutes re-



turned with two sets of harness. These were made of strips of deerskin a couple of inches wide, fixed to rawhide traces. The strips were made into a loop that went round each dog's neck to form a collar, and three strips, to which the traces were fastened, crossed his back, the first one just back of his forelegs, and the other two, which were fixed to the trace some fourteen inches apart, met on top of his back just in front of his hind legs.

In front of the store were two small two-wheeled carts which are used in the various towns to transport goods on during the summer months by means of dog teams. Then came the question of which should be the lead-dogs and which should be the wheel-dogs, as the dogs are called that are hitched in front and next to the sled, or in this case to the carts.

Next, old Jack and young Jack separated the dogs into two teams, with the plentiful advice of their former owners and others who were looking on, and then with the aid of more than willing hands of the old timers the dogs were hitched up with all the malamutes in one team and all of the huskies in the other.

“Now let's get the names of these dogs



straight, so that they'll know when we're talking to them," said Jack to Bill.

"First off, which team do you want, Jack?" asked Bill, though he knew his partner, like himself, was strong for the malamutes.

"You take whichever one you want, Bill."

"Well, I'll take the huskies if you don't mind," he replied as if he meant it.

"That wouldn't be regular, Bill; we'll draw straws and whoever gets the long one takes the malamutes."

"No, I must have them huskies. They're the best dogs, that's what all the drivers say, an' as I don't know much about drivin' dog-teams I orter have the best one, what say, Mr. Jack?"

Jack McQuesten saw through Bill's little game and his eyes twinkled for he had bored into Bill's nature when he first saw him and he knew he had a heart as big as all Alaska.

"Give him the team of huskies, Jack," was McQuesten's decision; "Bill deserves them."

In Jack's team of malamutes 'Frisco was the lead-dog, with Wolf, Jennie, Tofty, Jim and Prince after him while Skookum was wheel-dog. The team of huskies that Bill fell heir to was



made up of Sate, the leader, and after him came Caro, Lukeen, Danny, Lon, Moosehide and Jinx for wheeler.

How these dogs came by their names is, as Kipling used to say, another story, or, rather, more in the nature of a riddle, but we can make a guess at a few of them. For instance 'Frisco, who was a pure malamute, couldn't have come from San Francisco, hence it is likely that his first owner had. Wolf, also a pure malamute, probably came by his name from having been a wolf killer. Tofty, from a town over near Fish Creek where he might have been born, while Skookum means *strong* in the Chinook jargon. So much for Jack's team.

As to Bill's team, Sate, it seems clear, is a contraction of Satan, and was so called because he was an imp of knowledge, as wise and wily as huskies are made. Caro is a town over by Chandlar Lake, about a hundred miles northwest of Fort Yukon; Lukeen got his name from old Fort Lukeen, on the Kushokwin River, but on whose site the town of Kolmakoffsky now stands. He was a long, long way from the place where his slit-eyes first saw the light of day. Moosehide may have derived his cog-



nomen by having eaten this delicacy when he was once starving to death, while Jinx is a name that is always associated with bad luck and he finally lived up to it.

The storekeeper handed Jack and Bill a raw-hide whip apiece, about twelve or fourteen feet long, and told two of the drivers to give the boys a *hand*, which was his easy way of saying to show them how to manage the teams, for it takes much time and a deal of practice before a tenderfoot can drive these dogs by word of mouth and the crack of the whip.

It was plain to be seen that the dogs were glad to be in the traces again and they all stood alert and ready for the word to *mush*, which means the same thing as the farmer's *gid-ap*. While Jack had had some experience with driving a dog team in the Arctic he was by no means an adept at it and poor Bill was as helpless as a pedestrian crossing Fifth Avenue at Forty-Second Street. But the men knew and the dogs knew what to do.

There was a crack of a whip that sounded like a pistol shot, with a yell of "*mush, you huskies,*" and Bill's team was at it and away. Another crack of a whip and another "*mush*



on" from Jack, when his team followed a close second in the wake of the other. It was great sport for the old timers watching the breaking in of the new teams and their new drivers. For the boys it was real hard work and they felt as though they were sweating blood in their efforts to keep the dogs under control.

Every day from that time on Jack and Bill hitched up their dog teams and carted goods to and from the boat landing and the store for Jack McQuesten and when there was nothing else to do they would get on their carts and ride all round the town to the end that they might learn how to drive the dogs right and so that the dogs would get used to them.

As both Jack and Bill were past masters in the game of handling horses they used the same tactics with the dogs—that is to say, they treated them decently and punished them only when they really needed it. At first the dogs didn't know what the boys were up to, being so kind to them; they seemed to think it was a trick and some of them resented it. Now it has been said that malamutes and huskies have no affection for anyone, not even the man that feeds them, but Jack and Bill believed that dogs are



alike the world over and they proceeded to prove it by making friends with these work-dogs of the north. This in the face of the fact that the old timers told them that petting the dogs would spoil them, but the boys thought differently.

Came then the first fall of snow and winter had set in. For the next week or so the boys drove their dog teams around hitched to the sleds and both did much walking on their snow-shoes. Like driving a dog team walking on snow-shoes requires practice, only not nearly as much, and while Jack had learned both of these things in the Arctic they were an entirely new means of transportation to Bill, but he took to them with avidity for they were in the nature of sport.

As I had occasion to remark in an earlier account of Bill, he could learn anything that had to do with the concrete, as for instance riding or shooting or athletics, but when it came to the abstract, such as extracting cube root, how wireless works or the way chemical elements combine, he was as compact as the antlers of a bull moose. But he was like the rest of the human herd in that he would have given his



gold-tooth to be able to do what someone else could do, only it must have to do with the working of the mind. What Bill did have, though, was a good memory, but he lacked the fundamentals of education and this was where he fell down. But this has nothing to do with snowshoes and how he learned to use them.

His first efforts at snowshoeing were like everyone's else, laughable in the extreme, and the natives who congregated to watch him roared as he spilled himself this way or that way and then must needs have assistance to get up again. Before he had done with it, though, he could walk on them very swiftly notwithstanding his rather short bowed legs and it was surprising how quickly he learned the swinging outward motion that must be acquired in order to become an expert.

To cap the climax he laughed best at them by laughing last when he turned a complete back somersault with a pair of five-foot snowshoes on and that, as you will allow, is some very considerable trick.

"He'll do!" as Jack McQuesten put it.

A good deal of snow had fallen, the streams and rivers had frozen over so that the sledding



was good and it was getting around the zero mark. The long awaited day had arrived and Jack McQuesten had packed their outfit on the sleds, at the same time showing the boys how to do it. There is a wonderful knack in knowing how to pack, and the "freight-car" that Bill had declared they would need to carry their outfit, which the old trader had made up for them, his experienced hands compressed into two comfortable loads. It was next to impossible, as Jack said, to believe that such an enormous amount of stores could be contained in so small a space.

The dogs were harnessed and they knew that now they were in for some real work but they were none the less anxious for the start. Then there emerged from McQuesten's store two strange figures dressed in furs from head to foot. They were neither Eskimos nor Indians but a look at them full in the face revealed that they were no other than a couple of youthful gold seekers who had come out of the far east and answered to the names of Jack and Bill. Truly they looked of the North, Northern.

Finally just as the first dull streaks of daylight sifted through the thick air the cracks



of their rawhide whips broke the monotony of weeks of waiting and the orders to "mush on, you huskies" from both Jack and Bill who were at the handle bars of their sleds started the teams down the main street of Circle at a brisk pace.

They crossed the Yukon River and took the No Name River that flows into it a little to the north of Circle and whose headwaters lay some forty miles to the east of it. By noon they calculated they had covered about fifteen miles and here they made their first stop, had a drink of hot tea from their thermos bottles and did justice to some other edibles that Sing Nook had knocked together for them, and they were not Alaska strawberries either.

After they and the dogs had rested half-an-hour, they broke out their sleds, which means loosening the runners, which freeze and stick fast, by moving the sled sidewise with the gee-pole, and started up the river again. They didn't make such good time now for the work was new and was telling on them even more than it was on the dogs. So by sundown they had made only ten miles more, but Bill said he thought that was doing mighty well under



the circumstances and Jack thought so too. They had hoped, though, to make the head of the stream that night.

"Four days o' this kind o' goin' will put us in the land o' the Yeehats," said Bill.

They pitched their tent on the bank of the river and built a rousing fire just outside of it. Then they fed the dogs a generous piece of fish each, which is the principal diet of the dogs in Alaska; this done they got their own suppers and, just to see how it would go, they warmed up some pemmican, got out the hardtack and made a big pot of coffee.

Here it was that Bill was introduced to that celebrated food which was the chief factor in the discovery of the North Pole, though of course Peary and his malamutes and the Eskimos had something to do with it too.

"Pemmican," allowed Bill, making a face that would put shame to an ancestor on a totem-pole, "seems to be a concoction on the order o' a brownstone house built up o' schnitzel and artificial rubber. I suppose it is all right though when everything else is all wrong but when we get there," and he pointed somewhere in a



direction that might lead to the North Star, the one hundred and thirty-fourth parallel and New York, but meaning their winter quarters to be, "it will be venison steak for ours."

The dogs, tired after their first day's work, since they had been idle all summer, had disappeared, having dug out holes in the snow and gone to bed. The boys, though they were dead tired too, were in no mood for sleep, but in their fur clothes they were as warm as though ensconced in their own steam-heated homes, while the mellow glow of the candle light inside their tent gave it as cheery an aspect as a cluster of electric lights in a parlor.

So they sat around for an hour or so after supper discussing their successful start, their outfit, the dogs and—not to be forgotten for a single moment—the gold they were after. It was good to know that here, far from the civilized haunts of men, there were fourteen huskies, strong of leg and tough of feet, sleeping out there under the snow who could carry them to the farthestmost ends of the frozen North if needs be. It gave them a great feeling of security.



"Imagine us, Jack, a-drivin' down Broadway or Fifth Avenoo! What'd the people think anyway?" Bill dreamed in an audible voice.

"I opine we wouldn't get very far," replied Jack, laughing at this ridiculous idea of his pal's.

"I'd like to know why not?" queried Bill.

"Because the *Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals* wouldn't stand for it for a moment. They would send the dogs to the *Bide-a-Wee* home and us to Randall's Island.<sup>1</sup> And then the tables would be turned for we'd get the dried fish and water and they'd get the pemmican, pink tea and ice cream."

"I'm on, Buddy; what's all right in one part o' the United States is a crime in some other part o' it. I guess we'll stay right here with our huskies, eh, Jack?"

"I'll say we will for about six months—or until we find that gold."

"These Indian guys ain't such slouches, are they?" went on Bill, who having filled up on pemmican was in a talkative mood. "Imagine them havin' sense enough to hitch up a lot o'

<sup>1</sup>The reformatory in New York where bad boys are sent.



dogs and puttin' them to work pullin' loads. Some invention I calls it."

"Oh, I don't know," said Jack. "While the Indians used dog teams before the white men came here, the Indians didn't know anything about using a smart dog for a leader and driving them by word of mouth."

"How'd they do it, then?"

"By having an Indian boy run ahead of the dogs and of course the dogs ran after him. It was the white man that put an intelligent dog ahead of the team to lead them. You must have noticed to-day that our lead dogs, 'Frisco and Sate, did mighty little real pulling but they kept the other dogs spread out and pulling their level best. And it's the leaders who *ho* and *mush* and *gee* and *haw* when we yell at them and impart our orders to the other dogs of the teams. It's always the white man who puts the finishing touches on things he finds."

"We'll put the finishin' touches on them sacks o' gold, I'm sayin'," Bill rejoined and then calming down a bit he added, "when we finds 'em."

The fire had burned low and the boys got



into their sleeping bags, when they followed their dogs into the shadowy land of dreams. But while the dogs dreamed of getting their fill of fish just once, their young masters dreamed of enough yellow gold to last them for all time.



## CHAPTER VII

### IN WINTER QUARTERS

THE barking and howling of the dogs woke the boys from a sound sleep. They quickly got out of their sleeping bags to see what it was all about and when they looked out of the tent they saw a pack of fourteen huskies with their mouths wide open and looking for all the world as though they were laughing, except when they were in the act of straining their vocal cords to make a noise.

If they could have talked the boys would have heard them say, "here, you sleepy fellows, get a move on yourselves, for we've got to do twenty miles to-day." The handsome brutes were as playful and joyous as any of their tribe this side of the happy hunting grounds where all good canines go to when they die and where the "toil of the trace and trail" are not known.

On second thought, though, it may just be that they were not so particularly anxious to



get into the harness again as it was that they had fond recollections of the dried fish they had eaten the night before, and that they were more than ready now for another helping of the same hyperbolical breakfast food.

While Jack fed them more generous portions of fish than they had ever known before, Bill proceeded to get their own breakfasts, of crisp bacon, real bread made by that heathen Chinese, Sing Nook, back there at Circle, and coffee with condensed milk and sugar in it. What more could they—could anyone—want? The boys couldn't imagine.

Now as long as they had followed the river their course had been due east and they didn't have to worry about going in the right direction but when they reached the end of it their course lay north-east, which is, naturally, forty-five degrees between the points of the compass known as *due north* and *due east*. To follow this course they produced their compasses and while both Jack and Bill were perfectly familiar with the use of the instruments something seemed to be wrong with them, for instead of the needles pointing to the north as do all good compasses, they pointed almost due east, or to



be exact they pointed to *east by north*, which is eleven and one-fourth degrees north of due east.

“It’s twelve o’clock by both your watch and mine and there’s the sun overhead on the meridian, so north must be up there and here’s these bloomin’ compasses a-pointin’ to the east,” complained Bill. “Here we are a thousand miles from nowhere and we don’t even know the blinkin’ north when we sees it.”

“Now don’t get excited, Bill, but let’s investigate this thing and reason out the whyness of the wherefore,” said Jack sanely, though he couldn’t understand it any more than did his “pard” Bill.

They were so close to the north-pole the needles vibrated with dynamic energy and yet they fixedly held their positions north by east.

“Maybe it’s the hardware in our outfit that’s affectin’ them, or the pemmican we had for lunch yesterday, or else the dogs have et a keg-o’-nails afore we left Circle,” suggested Bill, who had a better idea of funning than he had of science.

“There isn’t enough iron in our outfit to affect them as you can tell if you will walk



around the sleds with your compass. It may be the pemmican, though, for I sort of feel as if there's a loadstone in my stomach. Leaving all joking aside, Bill, there is something here—some phenomenon we don't understand," returned Jack, thinking as he had never thought before.

"It may just be," he went on, "that there is a vein of iron ore running along in this direction which would of course account for the erratic behavior of the needles. If so we'll soon get out of the range of its influence. What we'll do is to call the point marked *east* on our compass cards *north* and then if we travel *north by east* we'll really be going in the right direction, see?" explained Jack.

"It's as clear as mud," responded Bill, "we'll have a nice time correctin' the errors of these compasses when they are ninety degrees outen the way. You can use your compass if you want to but I'm goin' by the blinkin' Sun and the bloomin' North Star, I am."

All that day as they were mushing on Jack kept tab on his compass and Bill kept his eye on the sun and while they both firmly believed they were headed right, the compass, by which



the mariner pushes boldly forward, steering always as it directs, knowing it will not send him astray, had the boys worked up into something that very nearly approached a nervous state of mind.

All the time they were on the march that afternoon the going was very much heavier than it had been on the No Name River, for they had to break the trail as they went along. Jack kept wondering what had come over the compasses that so persistently made them point east instead of north.

When they had established camp that night they were still discussing the frivolous peculiarities of compasses which enabled them to point east when they were on top-o'-the-world with the same degree of freedom that they pointed north when they were used on the rim-o'-the-world.

The weather was crisp and cold and the air as thin and clear as crystal. Bill, who had lost faith in the instrument that is the symbol of unerring accuracy, stood forth in the night, looking more like some barbarian of the glacial age than a pampered boy of the gas-house district and viewed the twinkling lights in the



bowl of the heavens. He called Jack and indicating the North Star with his finger said:

“Either that star is wrong and our compasses are right or the other way about, but ’tween you and me, Bud, I’ll bank on the North Star every time and *dish* the compasses.”

“I know exactly where the trouble comes in, Bill; funny I couldn’t have thought of it before,” said Jack, brightening up as though his brain-cells had decohered. “The North Star and the compasses are both right. You know that the magnetic north pole and the true, or geographic, north pole are not in the same place.

“In fact the magnetic pole is way south of the true pole—let me see, if I remember rightly it is pretty close to the meridian which is one hundred degrees west of Greenwich and on the sixty-eighth parallel, and is, consequently, nearly twenty degrees south of the geographic pole. This is the reason, then, our compasses point to the east instead of to the north; the only thing we don’t want to forget to do is to allow for this difference.”

“Right you are, Jack,” Bill made answer,



for of all times that his admiration for his partner welled in his breast it was when the latter explained what he called "this high-brow stuff." "Say if I had a brain like yourn I wouldn't be up here seekin' moosehide sacks o' gold, I'd be back there in little ole Noo York on Wall Street shovelin' it into vaults; that's what I'd be doin'."

Having disposed of the vexatious problem of the North Pole Bill again took an interest in his compass and began figuring out how many points this way or that way they would have to go to get so many points the other side of somewhere else. Bill didn't know it but up there in the cold, cold North he was developing his gray matter, for he was *thinking* and this is the only process by which it can be done.

And so for the next three days they kept steadily onward over tundras, on streams, through wooded lands, up hills and down dales and always north by east. Nor did the boys feel a bit lonesome here in these vast stretches of the sub-Arctic ice and snow and the great, grim solitude of nature but this may be accounted for in virtue of there being hardly



ever a minute but that they were kept on the jump doing something for either themselves or the dogs.

Neither were they without companions for the dogs were the most wonderful company ever. They showed the most amazing intelligence, particularly 'Frisco and Sate, and Bill was not far from the truth when he said "they're human and that's all there is to it." And in very truth so it seemed, for whatever they wanted to do or say, they knew precisely how to go about it, or to make themselves understood.

"We still have another day's journey before us," Jack announced as they made their last temporary camp, and they were, indeed, getting pretty close to the end of the rainbow, for they were even then in the land of the Yeehats, which was the land of their golden hopes.

But to Bill, instead of there being more gold the farther north they went, the snowscape grew more desolate and forbidding, for he was better acquainted with a semi-torrid climate than he was with a wholly frigid one, and to him the outlook was far from alluring. Jack who had spent nine months in the Arctic didn't



mind it a little bit. He had the makings in him of a polar explorer.

Harking back to that July morning when Jack had unfolded the fascinating story of gold in moosehide sacks to him in his apartment, and now looking out upon the snow-veiled land as far as his eye could reach Bill again began to wonder if, after all, it wasn't a fairy tale told by a writer of fiction, or, more likely, a hoax perpetrated by the early miners on the tenderfeet who pestered them with questions.

"What I'd like to know is if this metal is really up here," he finally said to Jack, "why haven't men like Jack McQuesten, Doc Marling, Sam Stoneback and all the other old timers who have lived in Ilasker ever since gold was discovered, searched for and found this treasure."

Jack smiled cynically—that is, as cynically as a boy can smile.

"You might just as reasonably ask me why the head door-keeper of the Stock Exchange has not made a fortune on the floor—he's on the *ground* too you know. Or why is it a boot-black sometimes becomes a millionaire, or a girl from Tin Can Alley rises out of the depths and is crowned a queen?" Jack argued.



“Or Bill Adams, of Claremont Avenoo, seekin’ the yellow metal in the shadow o’ the North Pole,” Bill commented and then he added, “I’m gettin’ to be some poet like Mr. Service, what say, Jack?”

“Yes, this beautiful Northland will make a poet of anybody. But were the bootblack and the alley wench destined to do and become what they did do and did become?” Jack went on.

“Is it because they *thought* their way up, or is the element of chance responsible for it all? Perhaps it is like pemmican, due to a little of everything mixed together. These are things for you to think about, Bill.”

Bill *was* thinking but he couldn’t think fast enough to keep up with Jack’s line of talk, though he had the satisfaction of knowing what his partner was driving at and this was more than he was sometimes able to do.

“It sounds to me, Jack,” he finally said, “but I’m hopin’ as how you’re right. I wouldn’t take any stock in it comin’ from any one else ’ceptin’ yourself. Your hunches from the time I first knowed you has got the weegie board locked in a vault. An’ consekently I’m sayin’ as how I take it your hunch inkubator is in



just as good workin' order and reliable here in Ilasker, as it was down in Mexico."

"Now you're talking sense," said Jack, throwing out his chest, only it couldn't be noticed from the exterior because his caribou coat was so big it covered up his abnormal expansion. "And see here, Bill, you want to *cut out* this 'it sounds to me' stuff. I'm not exactly what you call a Christian Scientist but we'll never find the pot of gold if you're going to keep doubting it all the time."

This little talk gave Bill some food for thought too, and he resolved that let come what may he would never show any signs of its "sounding to him" again.

Along in the late afternoon of the next day they came to a river and Jack proclaimed that they had at last reached the end of their long trip.

"This is the Big Black River all right and if I haven't missed my guess we are about ten miles below the Arctic Circle and fifteen or twenty miles west of the International boundary line. Put her there, old pard, we're in the land of the Yeehats at last!"

"With nary a Yeehat in sight," said Bill as



they grasped hands, "but I'm goin' to keep my rifle handy if it's all the same to you."

Then came the work of building their winter quarters which was to be a log cabin of one room about twelve feet wide and fourteen feet long. There were plenty of trees about, the chief kind being Alaska spruce, and owing to its abundance in the more northern parts of Alaska it is used for work of every description, such as cabins, mining timber, firewood, sleds, etc.

The first thing to be done was to fell the trees and they began by sawing them down with their crosscut saw. Bill said he would rather chop them down and that he could do it easier and quicker than both of them could do it together with the saw. While this work was in progress the dogs grew restless on account of their inactivity and enlivened things up every now and then with a fight; then Jack would go among them, like Daniel in the lion's den, and use the butt-end of his whip handle on them until they broke apart.

"I'll give you *muts* something to do that will take the fight out of you," he told them, and he did, for as Bill felled each tree his



*pardner*, as he had now begun to call him, lashed a rope round an end and hitching the dogs to it put them to doing work the like of which none of them had ever done before.

And pull? Why, boy, they pulled so hard that their muscles looked as if they would break through their hides. After he had broken out a log and was ready to start Jack would give his long whip a tremendous crack and yell *mush!* when every dog did his duty and they liked it too.

It was a never ending source of wonder to the boys that these animals liked to work. And yet under the influence of kind treatment they were very affectionate, especially the malamutes, though none of them showed it in a way at all like dogs that live in the lap of luxury. Neither would it do to pet one of them to the exclusion of the others else there would be a terrific fight going on in an instant for they were fearfully jealous, and would not tolerate the slightest show of partiality.

“I’ve got one o’ them high-brow ideas, Jack; I’ve been thinkin’ and thinkin’ as I’ve watched these huskies, and after what you told me about the way the dogs acted on the front over there



in France, I've concludod they've got human brains just the same as you and me. They could talk if they wants to but they just pretend they can't so they won't have to argy with a feller. They're just like them furriners in Noo York, they can *savvy* anything they wantor and anything they don't wantor *savvy*—why they don't."

"Then you believe in *reincarnation*," said Jack.

"Reindarnation!" was Bill's near echo. I might believe in it if I knew what it is, but not knowin' I cannot say."

Then Jack explained how some folks, including about four hundred million in India, believed that the souls of animals, when they died, passed on into the bodies of people. This was all easy enough for Jack to tell about but when Bill wanted to know what Jack meant by *soul* his partner had no small time telling him about it in a way that he could understand.

"It sounds reasonable," declared Bill, "and I would believe in this reindarnation thing only these dogs are so much decenter than most people."





"I'VE CONCLOODED THEY'VE GOT HUMAN BRAINS JUST THE  
SAME AS YOU AND ME."

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And so they worked and talked and talked and worked and another month slipped by before they got their log cabin done. The way Bill could swing an ax made Jack envious and while building the cabin was the hardest of hard work, both of these youngsters got a lot of pleasure seeing it go up log by log. And when it was all done they were as proud of it as any millionaire who ever built a mansion on Fifth Avenue.

And furniture! They made mission furniture, table, chairs and all the accessories of home, the like of which no missionary in the heart of lightest Africa ever set eyes upon. And comfortable! With a rousing fire, ham and Alaska strawberries, coffee and biscuits that Jack made so well (I didn't say so light) they were as comfortable as a husky after a double ration of dried fish, fast asleep under the snow.

"I'm thinkin' we've got to get out and kill some fresh meat," suggested Bill after a meal in which the spirit of Sing Nook was present, *i.e.*, when the strawberries came on as usual.

"I thought you declared that Alaska strawberries were every whit as good as the spaghetti



we used to get at *The Black Cat* back in New York, when we thought we were a couple of highflyers," Jack laughed.

"Oh, for a dish of spaghetti," sighed Bill, and then he came back with this statement: "Ilasker strawberries are all right but after you've et them for thirty or forty meals you get a lee-tle tired of them and pine for a young oyster, in a bowl of cracker soup, or a couple of fried eggs—one fried on one side and one on the other—or even a steak from a hoof of a panhandle longhorn."

"I move that to-morrow we begin 'prospect-ing'," Jack said, paying no attention to Bill's likes and dislikes. "We've been away now for over three months and all we've got to show for it is an outlay of more than a thousand dollars, these two mighty good dog teams, our cabin and the fun we're having."

"Then let's go to it," Bill said.

"We'll strike out across the river and go due north; then every trip we make we'll veer round five points until we've boxed the compass."



## CHAPTER VIII

### ON THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

WHILE the boys did not expect to be gone longer than a week, or ten days at the most, on any one spoke of their prospecting wheel, and carried good grub to last them for this length of time, they nevertheless took the precaution to stock up with enough alcohol, compressed tea, hard tack and pemmican for themselves, and dried fish for the dogs, to stave off starvation for a month in the event of meeting with an accident, getting stormbound, or wanting to make a longer stay.

With a team apiece of seven dogs and a load of only a hundred and fifty pounds it was possible for them to ride on their sleds a good deal of the time. But this does not mean that they could very often actually sit on them but the way they did it was to stand on the rear ends of the runners and hold on to the handle bars.

The night before they made their first trip



out they packed their traveling mess-gear, which consisted of a collapsible stove and alcohol for fuel, grub and the few other necessary things of their outfit, on the sleds, so that they could make a start the next morning at day-break.

They crossed the Big Black River and drove due north over the tundra (a Russian word, pronounced *toon-dra*,) which is a rolling prairie, without any trees on it; the soil is black and soft, or *muck* as it is called, and on it both mosses and lichens grow. They drove due north and in the course of time Bill announced that according to the sun, his watch and his stomach there should be a period of rest and of eating. According to Jack's calculations they had made about twelve miles and were moreover right then on the Arctic Circle.

"After we gets through with the eats, Jack, I wants you to edicate me on this Arctic Circle thing," said Bill as he threw the dogs their fish.

Jack was busy opening the thermos bottles of hot tea and getting out the sandwiches.

"What do you want to know about it?" he asked absent-mindedly, for he was not a little bit interested in this at the particular moment.

"I wants to know *why* is the Arctic Circle,



and everything else about the bloomin' thing. The way I've doped it out it is like a meridian or the equator, that is, it's a line that you can't see and yet it's there or here just the same. I'm settin' on it and I know it but I can't prove it. As man to man, now, I'm askin' you what is it?" asked Bill with great earnestness.

Jack looked at him and laughed.

"You asked a question and then answered it yourself in the next breath. You've said all there is to say about it except that it's a circle running round the North Pole like an ostrich feather on a lady's hat, only, different from the latter, it extends on all sides of the pole to latitude sixty-six degrees and thirty-two minutes north."

"But why is it?" persisted Bill.

Jack thought a moment.

"The chief reason the Arctic Circle is so called is because it is the circle below which the sun does not drop in mid-summer. If we were here on the Arctic Circle in summer we'd see the sun at midnight just above the horizon, and the farther north a person goes in summer the higher he will see the sun above the horizon at midnight. Lots of tourists come up here every



summer just to take a look at the midnight sun, and the natives call them *sunners*."

"An' we won't get to see it then?" kicked Bill; "it's just my luck. If it 'ud be rainin' soup I'd be standin' out in it with a fork."

"We're not up here to see the sun at midnight," Jack came back at him, "we're lucky if we get a glimpse of it at noon. What we're up here for is to get the yellow stuff."

"Oh yes, I kinda lost sight o' the bloomin' gold for a minute," was Bill's reply.

It was great sport, now that their loads were light, for the young drivers to flourish their whips and crack them in the dry air, while the dogs, fed-up, fresh and eager, raced along, with tinkling bells where the going was good, as though they were making a dash for the pole. The boys and their outfit would have made a capital movie, but there wasn't a cinematograph camera nearer than Skagway on the south or St. Michaels on the west.

At this time of the year, the period of daylight on the Arctic Circle is very short and as darkness came on they pulled up on the banks of a stream to make camp.

"This must be the Rat River," said Bill.



"It is, but it certainly isn't much at this point. We're close to its head waters though and that accounts for it. It empties into the Porcupine River about sixty or seventy miles west of here. It might be worth our while to make a survey up and down the river for a few miles, so tomorrow let's go down stream."

They had not gone more than five miles the next morning when their attention was attracted by a huge fire a couple of hundred feet back of the north bank and they drove up to see what was going on.

"Bet it's the Yeehats barbecuin' a caribou," suggested Bill who was dying by inches for the want of a caribou steak.

"Look again," said Jack, and then Bill saw the winter diggings of some miners, three all told, one white man and two Indians, busy with picks and shovels.

"Lookin' for our gold," was Bill's idea of it.

"More likely they are mining for some on their own account. A great deal of placer mining is done up here in the winter—has to be done in winter as a matter of fact—because the ground is so low and wet that they can't do any digging in the summer time, for the hole



fills up with water as fast as the dirt is thrown out.

“The way they work it according to what Rip Stoneback told me, is like this. The miner cuts all the fire-wood he can in the summer, which isn't a great deal as it is so scarce in these parts, and builds his *sluice-box*; then when winter sets in and it begins to freeze, he clears the moss off of a small patch. On this clearing he builds a fire and keeps it going until the ground is thawed down a foot or so when he digs it out; then he builds another fire, digs out the thawed ground and repeats the operation until he has sunk a shaft through the muck and gravel to bed-rock.

“Now between the gravel and bed-rock is a layer of gold-bearing dirt called *pay-streak* and this is hoisted to the surface by means of a windlass on the ends of whose rope are spliced a couple of buckets; and this windlass, of course, sets over the shaft. Usually two men go down in the shaft and pick the frozen pay streak from the ground. The shafts vary in depth from fifteen to forty feet depending on what part of the country the mine is located.

“The third man stays on top to draw up the



buckets and with a wheel-barrow wheels the gold-bearing dirt back and dumps it in a pile where it will be in no danger of getting washed away by the melting snows when spring comes. In the spring when water is plentiful the fun begins for then the *clean-up* takes place and the men who were as poor as Indian dogs all winter wax rich and take their winnings back to civilization where they can be separated from it.

“The *clean-up* means that the color-bearing dirt is shoveled into the sluice-box, that is, a trough without ends, into which the miner has contrived to keep a steady stream of water running. The water washes away the dirt and leaves the free gold just as it does in the more primitive method of panning.”

The miners were as glad to see the boys as the latter were to see them, yes even more so. They immediately knocked off all work and there was a regular “chin-fest,” as Bill called it, from that time on. They made the boys stay to supper and improvised bunks in their cabin for them to sleep on. After Art Jennings, who, as you will gather from his name, was the lone white man, had heard the news of the outside world they talked about three other things only,



the first of which was gold, the second gold and the third gold.

“This placer minin’ is altogether too slow a game for me,” remarked Bill when they were on their way again. “What I wants is to see moosehide sacks of it piled up like cordwood, I do.”

“Well there are moosehide sacks of it *cached* right here in Yeehatville on the Circle. From the Pacific Ocean on up to the Arctic Ocean there’s gold. In every stream and river, as well as the land between them, this precious metal is found in either particles or in nuggets. Take the Klondike! it’s not much larger than the Rat River here and yet so much gold was found there its name became known all over the world. Every river in Alaska and the Yukon, I suppose, is just as rich but you don’t hear much about them because the Klondike was the first and so outshone all the rest. We’ll get ours yet, don’t worry,” said Jack hopefully.

Each trip the boys made from their base of supplies took them from one to two weeks. Their marches in and out were usually made in a couple of days and when they had worked away from their permanent base as far as they



wanted to go they would set up a temporary camp.

If the weather was not too severe, that is to say below zero, they pitched their tent, but when it got to twenty, forty or sixty below, or a blizzard struck them as it frequently did in mid-winter, they made a better camp by cutting out blocks of snow and piling them up into a dome-shaped shelter like the igloo of the Eskimo, but which Bill, who always persisted in nick-naming everything that was new to him, called a *butter-dish*.

Building a snow igloo was a simple matter after they had put up a couple, and the boys got it down to such a fine point that they could do the complete job in two or three hours. Of course this was largely the result of Jack's experience in the Arctic which enabled him to go about it in the right way. He had brought his saw-knife with him for this express purpose. This useful tool is about eighteen inches long and one and three-fourths inches wide and while one of the edges of it is sharp like a knife the other edge has teeth cut in it like a saw.

With this saw-knife Jack or Bill would saw out the hard frozen snow into blocks which for



the lower layers of the igloo measured about two feet in length and eighteen inches wide and high; as the upper layers were reached they used smaller and smaller blocks. Finally when all of the snow-blocks but one were laid up and the igloo was as hemispherical as the half of a ball, the last block, which they beveled on four sides, was set in the center and this held all of the other blocks out like the keystone of a bridge.

They made these snow igloos about six feet in diameter on the inside of the base so that they could lie down comfortably. To get into the igloo they left one of the snow blocks of the first layer out and through this hole they also took in the grub they needed, the alcohol stoves and the sleeping bags. To close the hole it was only necessary to push in the snow block when they were pretty well housed in.

What, then, with their fur clothing, a log house at their permanent base and these snow igloos at the ends of their trips, they were able to keep quite comfortable. Nearly every one who has never put in a winter in the Arctic, or sub-Arctic, regions seems to think that the extreme cold is a thing to be feared, but it isn't



if one has the right kind of clothes, enough food and if, when outside of the shelter, he does not stop but keeps right on going or working. But the long hours of darkness often get to be mighty monotonous.

Being boys, however, nothing could chill their ardor or cast a gloom on their spirits for any length of time and they were always ready for a frolic. Thus it was when they were sledding on streams where the ice was good they had some great races. Each contended that his team was the swiftest that ever pulled a sled and this difference of opinion invariably led to a challenge to prove it.

The dogs entered into the spirit of the races with as much zest as their young masters and when they were abreast and the signal to *go* was given, the whips cracked and the dogs jumped to get first place. Onward they dashed with an ease and grace that made them seem more like rubber balls bouncing along low on the course, than four-footed animals whose business it was to work.

But the spirit of sport was strangely strong in these living, vibrant creatures and as they fairly flew along over the course they voiced



their joy by short howls and yelps when they were in the lead or their anguish by whines and cries when they dropped behind.

Jack was, perhaps, a better driver than Bill but in his own heart he gave the credit to his team when they won and win they nearly always did. Bill was a good "sport" though and never got "sore" when he lost a race; he always took the blame on himself for his poor driving and nothing could shake his belief that his was the fastest team, bar none, in all Alaska.

There were a few times though when Bill's team won. One of these rare occasions was when a snowshoe rabbit ran from a bank onto the ice intending to cross to the other side; finding himself in front of a terrible pack of running dogs or wolves, he knew not which, that were bent on catching him, instead of going on across to safety he ran straightaway ahead of them.

Sate, Bill's lead-dog, spotted him first and he ran as he had never run before; the dogs of his team felt this super-burst of speed on his part and as the rabbit paced him, so he paced them with the highly gratifying result, to Bill, that his team jumped ahead of Jack's by a length. The boys urged their teams on with



their "yow-yows," and the bells jingled joyously while the wild race was on.

The dogs of both teams had forgotten that there were such things as a trace or trail, while the boys had lost sight of the treasure they were seeking and let nothing impede their mad flight toward destruction. At the end of a quarter of a mile Bill's team was nearly three lengths ahead of Jack's and he felt the race well won. His dogs had lost all interest in the race, indeed, they did not know they were racing for it was the rabbit they were after now. Then little snowshoe fooled them, for he made a sharp turn and ran up the bank.

Sate likewise turned as sharp as the high speed he was making would allow; the team swerved abruptly, slipped and slid for half-a-dozen yards, the sled upset and everything was piled up in a heap. Jack's team shot by them like an arrow and they ran for another quarter of a mile before he could stop them in their mad flight. When he got back he had to admit that Bill's team had won the race but it cost them an hour's work to make good the damage done. There was no more racing that day.

"You see, Jack, as I always told you, my



team is faster than yourn and all it needs to show speed is a rabbit for a pace maker," was Bill's comment as he picked himself up.

In their goings and comings they ran across all sorts of wild animal life from the little lemmings, a mouse-like animal with short ears and tail, which looks like a miniature yellow rabbit, to the giant moose. In between these two extremes they saw squirrels, snowshoe rabbits, red and black foxes, lynxes, gray wolves and caribou. They had also seen the tracks of bears, for the species of bear that live in the sub-Arctic regions does not hibernate.

They often shot squirrel, rabbit and ptarmigan (pronounced *tar'-mi-gan*), a bird of the grouse order, and these served as dishes of great delicacy for the boys, as well as giving the dogs a welcome change from dried fish. Bill declared it to be the open season for bagging some big game and Jack agreed that they must. But it is hard to seek cached treasure and be big game hunters at the same time.

Once while they were moving leisurely along after a satisfying dinner and they were talking about hunting the caribou, moose and bear, the tables were suddenly turned on them when they



became the *hunted* prey of wild beasts, for a pack of famished wolves had scented them out and were headed straight for them.

Pell-mell came the lean, long-legged beasts with ears erect, ribs bulging out of their loose skins, tails drooping and starved to desperation. Instantly the boys halted their teams and had barely time enough to cut the dogs out of their traces before the pack was upon them. The dogs knew they were in for a fight to the death and braced themselves for it, while the boys drew their revolvers and stood on their sleds ready for the attack.

In less than a minute the wolves were upon them and the fight was on. The dogs met the onslaught with the strength and courage the wolves lacked; and in between pistol shots, each of which picked off a wolf, the dogs snapped in two the legs, and broke the necks of their savage ancestors with a crunch of their powerful jaws, or opened their bellies, which let their entrails half out, or severed the jugular veins when streams of blood spurted forth from the rips made by merciless fangs.

But the dogs suffered too, for often three or even four wolves would fight a single one and



in this unequal struggle he would go down unless his master took a hand and evened up numbers by a few well-placed bullets. Nor was it easy for the boys to shoot the wolves, for the fight was so fast and furious it was well-nigh impossible at times to send a piece of cold lead into their miserable carcasses without the danger of hitting their dogs.

One of the curious things was that when a wolf got hold of the harness on a dog it mistook it for brute substance instead of inert leather and it would bite it viciously and shake it furiously without getting the living response that it had the right to expect.

When the number of wolves had been brought down to twice that of the dogs, they knew they were beaten and the moment this happened their courage failed them and those that were left with strength enough to take to their heels slunk quickly away.

An examination of the dogs showed that far from coming out of the fight unscathed every one of them was in a bad way and, still more sad to relate, Jennie and Prince, two of the outside dogs of Jack's team, had to be shot to put them out of their misery. As the dogs were



so badly off and the harness cut up and chewed to pieces the boys had to make camp on the spot.

They dressed the wounds of the dogs as well as they could and gave them half-a-can of pemmican apiece—a food that the dogs liked above all else. While the dogs laid down and rested and nursed their hurts, their masters built an igloo, for they couldn't tell when they would be able to move on. While the igloo was going up there was nothing but kind words and praise for the dogs and it could be seen by the looks in their eyes and the expressions on their faces that they knew every word which was said to and about them, and enjoyed and appreciated it all. As Bill saw them now he was more thoroughly convinced than ever that these particular dogs were endowed with human brains and not just common dog brains.

“I always told you my team could outrun yourn and you'll have to admit they out-fought yourn too,” said Bill boastfully after the gloom had somewhat worn off.

“I don't see how you make that out,” Jack flared up.

“Well, two of your dogs will never *mush* again pullin' a sled after them here on earth—



though they may haul a little red cart with angels in it when they go tearin' along the trails o' heaven."

"That's no argument at all," returned Jack soberly, "and you can't get away with it either. Why, I saw 'Frisco rip the throats open of one wolf after another when four of them were at him at once. Prince and Jennie went down in a fluke—in a fluke I tell you—and that is the only reason they lost out."

"This is soitenly tough luck," said Bill as he was going over the wounds of the dogs before they turned in.

"And I'm two dogs short," moaned Jack, "though I'm mighty glad they were not the mal-amutes."

"Never youse mind, Buddy. I'll give youse one of mine and we'll still be even."

"I don't want any of your dogs, Bill, I'll just drive my five dogs along until we strike an Indian village or some camp and then I'll buy a couple of Siwashes. But I'm sure sorry to lose Prince and Jennie for they were a couple of dandy dogs to say the least."

Just the same when Bill had fixed the harness and hitched up the dogs preparatory to making



a fresh start, Jack saw with grim pleasure that the teams were even and that Bill's best dog, next to Sate his leader, was in the traces of his team.

Jack didn't say anything about it then but he made up his mind that when he went 'round the world on a pleasure jaunt, or anywhere else, Bill could go with him however crude his speech and rough his manner.

They limped back to their base of supplies and stayed there for a week until the dogs got into shape again.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE LAND OF THE YEEHATS

ON the various trips they had made from their base of supplies on the Big Black River the boys had kept a sharp lookout for marks or signs or other visual evidence which might indicate in some way the location of the treasure they sought. Jack's *hunch* was responsible for his belief that so great a store of gold would not, in fact could not, have been abandoned without some clew which would serve as a key to its recovery.

They often dug off the snow from a pile of dirt which they thought might cover the sacks of gold; as wood was frequently hard to get, they couldn't thaw it out and, consequently, had to work like "niggers" with their picks and shovels to penetrate it. And to what purpose?—usually only to find it was the dump of some discarded mine. But a gold seeker wots not of either hardship or work if his efforts give prom-



ise of bringing about the desired result. And they hoped great hopes.

Again they would find a *cache* (pronounced *cash*) but it was not of the kind that is formed of a hole in the ground, or a cavity under a pile of stones, but a box-like structure erected on poles set in the ground. Some of the better ones had notched logs which served as steps and these were set up at an angle on one side so that access to the cache could be made with greater ease and lesser agility. These caches were used by prospectors and miners who transported their outfits on their backs, or hauled them on sleds, and who had to double back on the trail time and time again before they got to their journey's end.

In nearly all of these caches the stores were of ancient vintage, a few of them dating back to the pioneers of '94 or perhaps a little later, and those who made the caches never returned to claim their contents either because they found they could get along without them, or were killed or died, or grew disheartened and made their way back to the river towns of the Yukon. In only a couple of them did they find fresh stores and in one of these, curiously enough, there was



a *poke*<sup>1</sup> of gold nuggets. Its owner, in all probability, had laid it down when he was stocking the cache and forgot to take it with him when he went.

Neither did the boys take it, nor disturb the stores in any of the caches they found, for it is an unwritten law in the barren north that no man shall touch anything cached which belongs to another.

On the fifth trip out they drove east, or more accurately east by south, crossed the International boundary line and headed straight for Mount Burgess forty miles away. As Jack had said, they cared not whether they found the gold in Alaska, in the Yukon Territory or on top of the North Pole, as long as they found it. After they had covered about thirty miles they ran into a scrub forest and the first thing Jack spied was a pair of moose antlers lashed to a tree.

Both he and Bill thought this a very strange circumstance but they presently concluded that it had been put there by some hunter though for what purpose they could not guess. After going half-a-mile farther into the woods they

<sup>1</sup>A poke is a small bag usually of deerskin.



came to another pair of moose antlers likewise lashed to a tree; this interested them in dead earnest and they began to investigate accordingly. Ordinarily when a trail is blazed through the woods a bit of the bark of the trees is chipped off at short intervals so that those who go or come cannot go astray but must find their way there and back, let come whatever may.

But here was a trail blazed differently from any they had ever seen or heard of, in that at considerable distances apart the antlers of a moose lashed to a tree pointed the way, but what that way led to neither Jack nor Bill had the remotest idea. Sometimes the antlers were so far apart, or led off at such angles, that they had to hunt for an hour or more for the next one.

"What, I'm askin' you as man to man, does it mean? Are we gettin' near it?" questioned Bill, blinking his blue eyes.

"I don't know," replied Jack soberly, though hoping against hope that it was the sign they sought; "but it is queer, isn't it?"

"Let's keep right on," was Bill's solemn advice.

"Mush on there, you huskies!" yelled Jack;



"double rations of fish for you if we find it."

"Ten rations of fish, three times a day fer life if we finds it, says I," came from Bill.

It is not known positively whether Sate could count up to ten or not but he gave Bill an awful look which in husky language meant "cut out that loose talk and maybe each of us will get a piece of fish for supper anyway," and with that he and his mates rushed on as fast as their masters could pick out the trail.

They kept this up the best part of the day when their quest ended at a log cabin not unlike their own, and over whose door was the largest pair of bull-moose antlers the boys had ever seen. The boys, who had been building high their hopes on something far less tangible than a claw, were disappointed to the quick but they had the right kind of stuff in them and so never batted an eye.

They were greeted by the barking and howling of many dogs and what with the noise their own teams made it sounded as if pandemonium had broken loose. Then Joseph Cook, hunter, trapper, Indian Agent and sometime gold seeker, otherwise familiarly known as Bull Moose Joe, for he had brought down more



moose than any other living man, appeared at the door and gave them a warm welcome.

“But why all the antlers lashed to the trees?” Jack queried after they had established comrade-like relations.

“I have blazed the trail to my cabin with antlers so that he who chances this way with his eyes open can find me.”

Bull Moose Joe was a man who stood six foot in his moccasins, was of medium build and as straight as an Indian. He looked as if he might have stepped out of the great West in the days of the fifties for he wore his hair long, had a mustache and a goatee. As usual with white men up there he must needs have the news from *down under*, no matter how stale it was, and then, also as usual, the conversation just naturally drifted over to the channel of gold. It was then that Bull Moose Joe gave the boys the greatest jolt they had had in all their varied but brief career in the gold-fields.

“I take it you boys are looking for the same thing I came up to look for ten years ago,” he said in an off-hand way.

“Yes, it’s gold we’re after,” replied Jack.

“Gold in moosehide sacks piled up like cord-



wood!" he added, watching the effect of his words on the boys.

And the effect was truly electrical for their faces became rigid, their eyes glassed over and they felt the very blood in their arteries congeal into water-ice.

"And—and—did you find it?" asked Jack when he had recovered his powers of speech a little.

"Yes, that's what we want to know," Bill gurgled as if his gullet was choked up.

Bull Moose Joe pulled a couple of times on his pipe, watched the hot smoke ascend and dissolve away just as had his dreams of gold. He laughed softly. He was in no hurry to answer but to the boys the moments seemed like an age.

"No," he said finally, "I never found it though I searched diligently for it winter and summer for the first five years I was here. I speak the *Hupa* tongue which is the tongue of the *Athapascans* and I learned to talk it so that I could find out what the Indians knew about it.

"There was once a tribe of Indians, who lived hereabouts and they were different from any of the Indians that are living in the Yukon or Alaska to-day, for they were as fierce and



bloodthirsty as the Apaches *down under*. Among our natives here there is a legend about a pocket of gold that was found by these Indians long before the gold seekers came on to it.

“Then hunters and trappers from the *Hudson Bay Company* pushed their way across the desolate wastes of upper Canada and coming upon this tribe they killed them and took the gold from them. Before they could get the metal out of the country they were attacked by the Yeehats, another band of Indians, and, in turn, lost their lives. These latter Indians *cached* the gold in a pile of stones but how long it remained there it is hard to say for the Indians now living seem not to know.

“Many years after, when men swarmed over Chilcoot Pass and White Pass like so many black flies, floated down the Yukon River and on to the Klondike, a miner named John Thornton and a couple of *pards*, left the others and pushed farther north. And then, like the fools for luck they were, they discovered the *cache* and in it the pile of nuggets that is worth millions.

“How to get it over to the Yukon River and

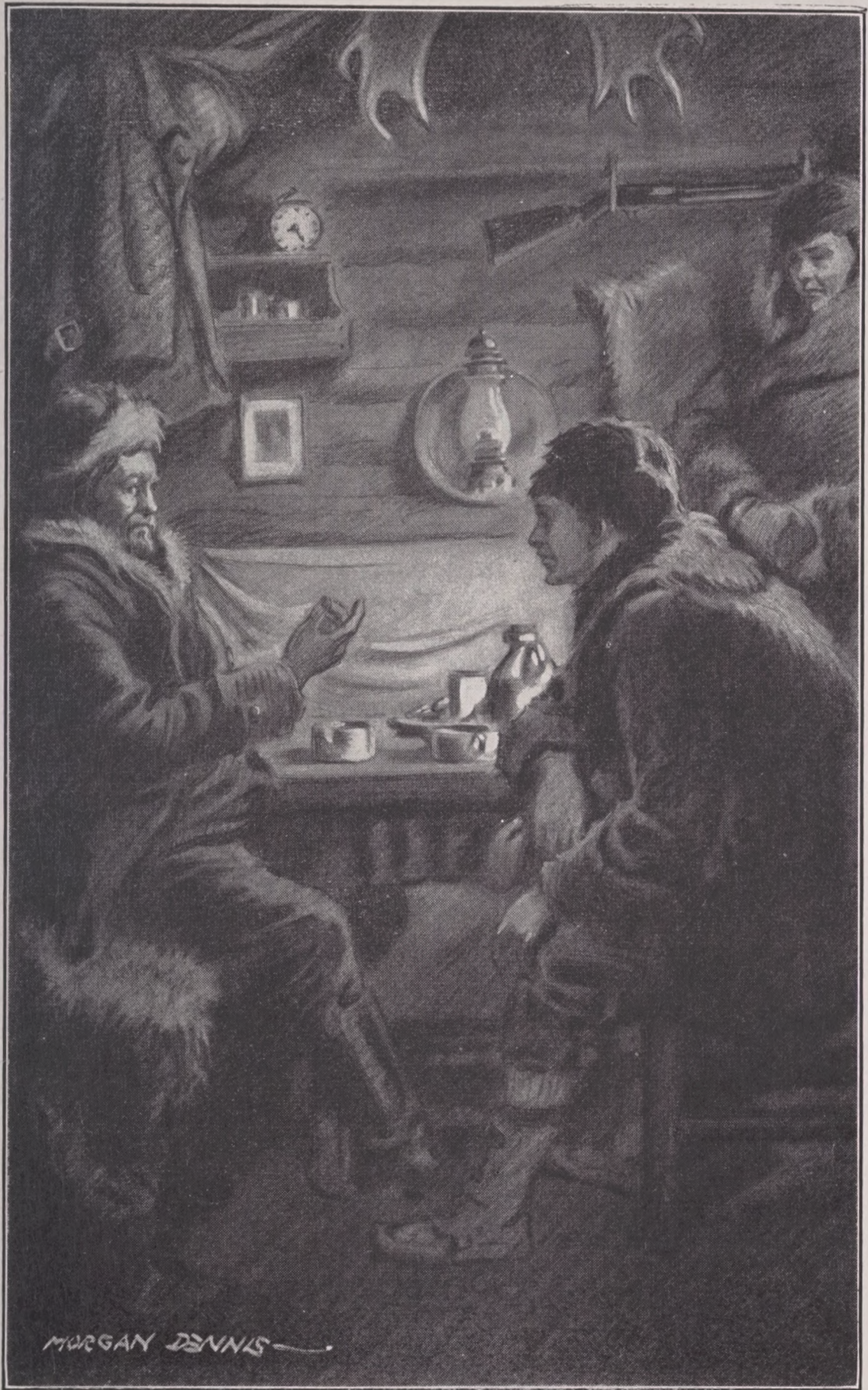


down under in safety were their only worries but they were big ones. They were rich beyond the dreams of the wildest stampeder and so to lessen the chances of loss by any means they took their time and laid the most painstaking plans.

“First they hunted the moose and made sacks of the hides; into these they packed the gold nuggets fifty pounds to the sack, and there were five hundred sacks which were worth millions. No sooner had they started than the Yeehats swooped down on them and although Thornton and his men put up a desperate fight they fell before the larger number of Indians and the moosehide sacks of gold stayed right where they found them.

“In a few years the Yeehats as a tribe were practically exterminated by starvation and disease and so the gold is still here, but exactly where, no one knows. But sometime it will be found again and if those who strike it are luckier than the others they will get it out; but that time has not yet come. To keep me going I began to trap and hunt and a year or so ago the *Minister of the Interior* made me Indian Agent for this part of the Yukon.”





“THESE INDIANS CACHED THE GOLD IN A PILE OF STONES.”

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“How did you come to take up moose-hunting?” Jack asked him.

“I calculated that when I found the gold I wouldn’t want to wait until I killed the moose needed to make the new sacks I should need, so I began to hunt them long ago and there they are,” and he pointed to a pile of finished sacks over in the corner. “You see I took time by the forelock.

“There’s only one other man up here that has any kind of a reputation as a moose-hunter other than myself and that’s Moosehide Mike who lives somewhere over in the Klondike River district. I met him a few years ago at a potlatch but as soon as we found out that each was looking for the same pot of gold we didn’t hit it up very well together.”

When the boys left Bull Moose Joe’s cabin they were on pins and needles, for their thoughts were of the most conflicting nature. Their belief that the gold was there was now for the first time fixed to a certainty; on the other hand what ghost of a chance had they of finding it when an old timer like Bull Moose Joe who had lived there for years and covered



the ground in winter and summer had not unearthed it?

"We won't be quitters anyway," announced Jack, "we'll keep right on as per schedule."

"You said it," affirmed his partner.

As they had met with quite a few Indians during their sojourn at Circle and had since run into several Indian villages, the boys had acquired a fair vocabulary of the *Chinook jargon*; which is a simple universal language formed of a lot of heterogeneous words which every Indian and white man understands and by which they are able to hold intelligible though limited conversation.

For instance, in the Chinook jargon the word *English* is called *Boston*; to go toward the shore is called *Friday*; a big lot of anything is expressed by saying *hi-ya*; a vile native alcoholic drink is known as *hootchenoo*, and from this latter word comes the word *hootch* which is used by the frontiersmen everywhere. *Do you understand*, or *you do understand*, is *kum-tux*; anything to eat is *muck-a-muck*; a strong person or animal is *skookum*; a friend, *tillacum*, and so on.

With a vocabulary of a couple of dozen words



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of Chinook the boys were able to get along fairly well with any of the Indian tribes they happened to meet. In all of the Indian villages they came to everything was quiet and peaceful excepting the fiendish howling and barking of the half-starved dogs. There was nothing to indicate the cruelty and ferociousness that marked the Yeehats and the Indians who lived in these parts before them.

Jack and Bill easily made friends with the Indians they came in contact with for they bought dried fish of them for their teams, gave them a few provisions where the need was great and Jack always carried his medicine case and treated the sick for such ailments as were not beyond his poor ability. These latter he had to leave for the *medicine man*, or *Shamen*, as he is called, to kill or cure.

One afternoon as they neared an Indian village of considerable size near the head waters of the Tatonduk River they met with whole families of Indians and on scraping up an acquaintance with some of them the boys gathered the information that they were going to a *pot-latch*.

Now about all that the Indians of this region



of Alaska do, outside of trapping and hunting, is to eat, drink and be merry, provided of course, they have the food and hootchenoo to do it with, for lacking these integers the resultant product, that is, unalloyed joy, could not be had. Among the Indians who were going to the *potlatch* was a half-breed boy who spoke English a little having learned it from Bull Moose Joe and other white hunters and trappers, and Jack promptly annexed him with the gift of a knife.

When Jack asked the lad his name he said that the white men called him *Kloshsky*, but that his right name was *Montegnard*. Now *Klosh* in Chinook means *good* but where the *sky* came from was not so easy to guess, unless he was nicknamed by some one of Semitic persuasion.

Kloshsky told the boys that the *potlatch* was a *hi-yu* feast with *hyas* fun, and that it was going to be given by a big man of the *Yikyak* tribe who wanted to be chief. The word *potlatch*, he explained, really means *gift* and that after much feasting, drinking, dancing and wrestling the man-who-would-be-chief and whose name was *Montegnais*, would give away everything he owned to his guests.



"Let's declare ourselves in on this *potlatch* thing," said Bill.

"Not a bad idea at all," admitted Jack. And so they followed the crowd.

Friends and relatives of the man-who-would-be-chief came from miles and miles around and the journey finally ended at an Indian village in the center of which was a big log house nearly as large as that of the Grand Palace Hotel back at Circle. Into it the visitors made their way and Jack and Bill went with them.

Talk about the decorations for a Halloween party! why, boy, nothing a white mind ever conceived of could begin to come up to the embellishments of this great hall. In the middle there was a wonderful bird that reached from the floor to the ceiling, nearly, and the like of which nature had never made in all her seven million years of experience. From the ceiling there hung curiously shapen birds, beasts and human beings that for fearsomeness outdid anything the boys had ever seen. As Bill said, "it was enough to scare a fellow half-to-death."

On poles, which were arranged in a circle around the giant bird, the finest blankets, the costliest furs and other articles prized by the



Indians were displayed and these, Kloshsky told the boys, were the presents which the man-who-would-be-chief was to give away.

When all had assembled the *potlatch* came to order. The big man was gorgeously dressed in ceremonial clothes and carried a long wand. Around him gathered his lieutenants (they would be so called down under) and they were also outfitted in ceremonial clothes.

Then came the orchestra which consisted of half-a-dozen men with their tom-toms. Finally followed the guests who moved about talking among themselves like society folks at a church fair. From the man-who-would-be-chief on down to the poorest Indian, all wore the richest kind of furs, some of them made of the silver fox, and they were ornamented with various decorations and natural jewelry. Many of the men and women wore necklaces and belts formed of gold nuggets as large as hickory nuts and these at once caught the eyes of the boys. Lo! the poor Indian!

Of all those present there were only two poorly dressed ones and these were a couple of rank outsiders who had come from down



under and now saw for the first time what Indian high-life really meant. Jack and Bill felt like a couple of hobos who had tumbled out of a box-car and landed in the midst of a fancy dress hall in progress on Fifth Avenue.

When all were assembled the man-who-would-be-chief opened the *potlatch* with a recital of the wonderful deeds his ancestors had done, that his family had done, and especially those that he had done.

"It's the same old stuff the politician who wants to be mayor, or governor, or president pulls in the States," Bill pointed out.

Then the players began to beat their tom-toms and when the rhythm of this bombastic music had stirred the souls of the guests to their very depths, it got them going and they danced for all they were worth. Most of them carried huge wooden masks that were a nightmare to look at. Different from our dances their movements were not regulated by art but by the simple history of their lives and of those of their ancestors; in other words they were folk-dances.

"I could do that dance as good as any of them



if I only had a false-face," spoke up Bill, who could see nothing whatever in the energetic but solemn performance.

"What do you want a false-face for? What's the matter with the one you have on?" said Jack, laughing heartily.

"I knew it was purtty bad but I didn't know it was as bad as all that," retorted his partner.

The dance over, the man-who-would-be-chief began to talk to the spirits of his ancestors. Getting no immediate response he called upon his guests to wake them up that they might hear what he had to say to them. He started them off with a large assortment of terrifying yells and this was augmented by cries, shrieks and screams of the others until it sounded like a band of renegade savages rushing to the first onslaught of battle.

Bill wasn't the least bit afraid of anything happening, because Jack had told him all of the people in Alaska and the Yukon country, whatever the color of their exteriors might be, were *white* at heart. But his excess of caution just naturally led him to fold his arms so that his hand wouldn't be more than half-a-second away from his six-gun should he need it.



The yelling kept up at a pitch so that a white man could not have heard himself think and it lasted for fifteen or twenty minutes. Neither Jack nor Bill took very much stock in what they were yelling for but (it is sad to relate and hard to believe) the primitive instinct in these boys overpowered the civilizing influences to which they had been subjected and time and again they both let loose the awful and heartrending *yi-yi, yi-yi*, of the cowboy.

"Oh, Harlem flat, where is thy sting?" said Jack when the yelling was over.

"You'd think they was a lot o' cliff-dwellers in Noo York tellin' the janitor in soothin' tones down the dumb-waiter to put on a little more coal," commented Bill.

Then came the wrestling matches between those who had been enemies and, without regard to which one won, when the bout was over they were good friends again.

"I could throw the two o' them with me right hand tied back o' me, see?" Bill sneered with evident disgust. "Let's you and me show these Injuns what a real wrestling bout is, what say, Jack?"

"Don't get peeved, Bill. This is their game.



If you saw a bout in the *New York Athletic Club*, or back of the gas-house, you wouldn't want to jump in and show the onlookers how it ought to be done, would you? Just remember that we are only innocent bystanders."

Next came the big feast and although there were caribou and rabbit, geese and ptarmigan, still that old standby without which no Indian feast would be complete had the place of honor.

There was a team of ten roast dogs all hitched up and going to fill the great void in the principal organ of digestion which existed under the belt of each redskin. They were *hot-dogs* in very truth.

"I think I'd better go an' find out if all our dogs says 'here' when I calls the roll," said Bill, and not withstanding Jack's assurances that these edible dogs were not their sled dogs, Bill went out and counted up the members of their teams just the same.

After every one had gorged himself, or herself, the man-who-would-be-chief began to distribute the presents. One of his lieutenants would call out a name, another would hold the gift before the person who answered to it, Montegnais would strike the floor with his wand



indicating his pleasure and the gift would be made.

The boys came last and the man-who-would-be-chief asked them their names. Kloshsky interpreted his wishes to the boys and through the linguistic ability of this half-breed lad they made known that they answered to the cognomens of Jack and Bill, the latter from "Noo" York. Then it was they knew the man-who-would-be-chief for a gentleman, even if he was a red-skin, for he gave them each a most wonderful blanket.

When he had given away all of his possessions the *potlatch* was over; it was then very near morning but as the boys were tired they stayed over at the village until the following day.

"Old hatchet face can have my vote, anytime," proclaimed Bill, as he admired his trophy.

"You're a nice American, you are," said Jack; "selling your vote for a blanket, eh!"

"There's a big difference," proclaimed Bill; "this man-who-wants-to-be-chief is a heathen savage politician while down in the States the politicians are civilized Christians. An' be-



sides they've got jails down there. Get me?"

Just as they were ready to start back Kloshsky, the half-breed boy, told them it is the custom to return all gifts to the man-who-would-be-chief within a month and that they must bring his blankets back by the next moon.

Jack and Bill reluctantly handed over their presents to Kloshsky and told him to give them back to the man-who-would-be-chief with their best wishes and kindest personal regards and other nice felicitations that are usually found on the ends of business letters.

"Mush, you huskies!" yelled Jack and Bill simultaneously while the Indians, less cheerful than on the night of the *potlatch*, waved them their adieus.

"Indian giver," said Jack when they were beyond earshot.

"I wouldn't vote for that stingy guy now if he gave me all the blankets he owns," grouched Bill.

But while they soon forgot the blankets they could not forget the necklaces and belts of nuggets the Indians wore and they had more reason than ever to believe they were at the rainbow's end where it dipped into pots of pure gold.



## CHAPTER X

### ON THE TRAIL OF GOLD

“WELL, how is old Potlatch this nice, bright, beautiful morning,” Jack jocularly inquired of his partner after they had started and their grouches had somewhat subsided.

“No more o’ them things for me,” replied Bill almost amiably. “We’ve wasted a whole day and we haven’t even got a blanket between us to show for it. What I was thinkin’ about, though, was the sacks Bull Moose Joe has made pertainin’ to an’ anticipatin’ the findin’ of the gold. My one best bet is that we gets the gold first off and the sacks arterward.”

“Now you’re talking sense, Bill. It just goes to show how all-fired over confident a fellow can be. Confidence is a good thing but some people have so much of it they fool themselves. Of course I’ll admit that it would take a long time to kill enough moose to make twenty or thirty sacks but a few months more or less wouldn’t



make much difference after we've got the metal. Of course if we accidentally stumbled onto a moose-yard that would be different."

The boys had hunted the caribou for their fresh meat supplies, in fact caribou were so plentiful in some districts of the country through which they passed they seldom had to use their stock provisions, such as bacon and Alaska strawberries, and as for the dogs, they waxed fat on the excess of meat they were given and grew sluggish. There was no need for them to die to get to the happy hunting grounds—they had attained all that their canine souls could wish for under these youngsters of great hearts and high courage who were their masters.

It is no trick at all to shoot a caribou and it is no sport either for if it is wounded it will not put up a fight. Sport in hunting big game comes in only when the hunter is exposed to danger and takes a chance of fighting for his life along with the beast he is trying to kill. And Bill was right when he said that any man who calls himself a sportsman and goes after caribou for the mere sake of killing them ought to be given a spanking and sent back home to his mother.



While Jack was something of a naturalist and knew all about caribou and their habits Bill was the expert when it came to dressing them. Bill shot the first caribou and when he brought it into camp he examined it closely for it was the first one he had ever seen at close range.

"It looks like a reindeer to me, pard," he said after eyeing it closely.

"It is a reindeer, for caribou and reindeer are one and the same animal; the only difference is that reindeer are domesticated and caribou are wild. Then again there are two kinds of caribou; the one you've brought in is the kind that lives north of sixty-four and this is called *barren ground* caribou, while the kind that lives farther south is called *woodland* caribou.

"You see the winter coat of this caribou is thick and almost white, but in summer it takes on a reddish-brown color except underneath and that stays white. As summer comes on the caribou goes north and in winter he comes down here to the woodlands. While he is quite shy yet his curiosity is so great it often gets the best of him and he will stand and give a fellow the once over until it is sometimes too late for him to retreat.



"As to speed, why he can beat a dog or a horse all hollow and so when he is running nothing but a target shot will bring him down."

"We must get some moose afore we start back for little ole Noo York. I want to take back the head and antlers of a big un to me goil, see," reflected Bill, who was evidently beginning to think of home.

Jack allowed that it might not be a bad scheme to bring down a moose or two, not merely for trophies of their prowess as big game hunters, but for the purpose of using their flesh for food, as well as their hides, in the possible event of their having need for them. Now, know you, that while in summer the moose usually travels alone, in winter a number of them will band together and trample down the snow in a space with their hoofs, and this is called a *moose-yard*.

Finally, one day, the boys came across tracks leading to a moose-yard, then quickly made a temporary camp, and struck out to stalk it. They came upon it just as the moose, of which there were about a dozen, had reached a small lake. In the yard were two old bull moose, half-a-dozen cows and the rest calves. The



boys crept up on them until they were within bullet range. The bull moose were magnificent specimens of wild animal life and must have weighed more than a thousand pounds apiece.

The boys chose their quarry and then two bullets speeded forth though the cracks of their Winchesters sounded like a single shot. They ran toward the moose but the bullets which had crashed into their great bodies did not kill them or even drop them to the ground. Instead, the wounded beasts bellowed with rage and as the boys came up they charged them with mighty fury, their great antlers cutting the air like so many sabers.

As fast as they were able to get out of the way of one of the bulls, the other was upon them and they were kept busy dodging, side-stepping and in devious other ways eluding them. In the skirmish between the boys and the bulls, the cows and the calves stood off at some little distance looking on but without the slightest show of any intention of joining in, for their belief in the power of the bulls to look after themselves was absolute.

Just as the larger of the bulls was making a final desperate charge on Jack, he pulled the



trigger of his rifle three times with lightning-like rapidity; the monster moose came to a dead-stop and toppled over, when a fourth bullet ended him and Jack had his first and only moose to his credit.

In the meantime Bill was having a hard time of it, for the other bull pressed him so close he not only could not use his gun but he had to drop it to save himself. Bill had seen bull-fights in Mexico, but a toreador dodging a bull of the bovine species was as mere child's play, he opined, as he afterward said in telling me about it, when compared with getting away from this mighty animal of the genus *Cervus*.

He had also seen, yes, had even performed, that seemingly superhuman feat known in the cattle country as *bulldogging* a steer, which means that a cowboy throws a steer to the ground by grasping its horns and twisting its neck until the animal falls, but he knew that this trick would not succeed with the monster he was now pitted against.

The struggle was going on away from where it started as far as powder will send a bullet and the moment Jack had killed his moose he ran to help his partner. Before he got within



firing range he saw a sight that he would not be likely to forget, no, not if he lived to the century mark. The bull moose had made a terrific lunge at Bill but instead of pinning him on his horns, or catching and tossing him a dozen yards or so as is the way of these enraged beasts, the New York boy had grasped his antlers as he lowered his head and with the agility of an acrobat, plus the desire to aid and abet the first law of nature, when the bull's head went up Bill went with it with his feet straight up in the air.

In another instant he turned completely over and landed on the moose's neck and there he gripped the coarse thatch of hair and held on with a tenacity of purpose that all of the bull's cavorting around could not shake off. Then it was that Bill drew his six-gun and emptied the contents of it into the head of the great beast, while a bullet from Jack's rifle brought him down. Finding their leaders were no more, the cows and calves turned and fled.

The next thing on the list was to skin the moose, and this was a very arduous job. Both of the boys, but especially Bill, could almost out-Indian an Indian when it came to skinning



a caribou but out here where the icy wind was cutting across the lake it was a very disagreeable task. Before they were through with the work the day had slipped into night and they had to make their temporary camp their quarters. After a supper of moose-cutlet they felt much "sorensified" as Bill expressed it, and he was not so badly off but that he could play a few *chunes*, as he called them, on his mouth organ. They piled the hides, both of which were as large as the largest buffalo hides, on their sleds, together with as much of the meat of the carcass of one of the moose as they could carry; this they took back with them to their permanent camp, and it solved the meat problem for a very considerable time to come.

While Jack could clean the skins quite as well as his partner, still the job didn't agree with his finer sensibilities and he balked on doing it in true Indian style. Bill was not so particular and he would squat squaw-like on the floor, lay the skin on his lap, hair-side down, grip the edge of it with his teeth, and with his left hand under it he easily and quickly cut and scraped away all the flesh and fat from it with





"BILL DREW HIS SIX-GUN AND EMPTIED IT INTO THE HEAD  
OF THE GREAT BEAST."

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his knife in the right and never once make a miscue and cut the skin.

Not satisfied with their experience as big game hunters in bringing down the moose, the boys pined for a bear. Now while bears are quite plentiful in many parts of Alaska they seemed to be mighty scarce in the Yeehat district, though every once in a while the boys would see the tracks of one. And so it was that Jack and Bill left their work of seeking gold ever and anon and sought to track, instead, the bear to his lair.

But their hunt for a bear was very like their hunt for gold in that they hunted both with vim and determination but neither the bear nor the gold was anywhere to be found. Yet the boys knew that both were there if they could only catchee 'em, as Sing Nook would say. When they came upon the fresh tracks of a bear, as they did once in a while in crossing lakes or going through the woods, they forewent their main quest in the hopes of getting a shot at Bruin, but instead they never even got a look at one.

But bear was not on their minds all of the



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time. They had been busy around their permanent camp for several days getting the moosehides into shape and bear was as remote from their minds as the prehistoric dinosaur.

One evening Jack was getting supper and Bill had gone over to the wood-pile, which was a stone's throw from the cabin, for some firewood. After he had been gone for a quarter of an hour, or so, Jack began to wonder what had become of him, inasmuch as he was waiting for the wood to broil a moose-steak. Another five minutes elapsed and Jack, who had become impatient, went to the door to hurry Bill up.

"Going to stay at that wood-pile all day," he yelled very loud and not very gently.

No answer from Bill, so Jack went over to see if anything could have happened. When he got close to the wood-pile he heard groans and when he came upon his partner he found enough had happened, and to spare. There was Bill keeled over in the snow covered with frozen blood while lying up as close to him as two mortal enemies could get was a big brown bear breathing his last.

Jack lifted his partner to his shoulder and



carried him to the cabin where he gave him first aid and washed him up. Bill was clawed, chewed, torn and bruised from head to foot and back again. Only for his fur clothing he must certainly have been killed.

After Jack had attended his partner and made him as comfortable as possible he went out to the wood-pile and took a look at the bear. Mr. Bruin had been slashed up quite a bit himself for Jack counted fifty-six knife wounds in his head and body. He was assuredly a whopper for he must have weighed in the neighborhood of six hundred pounds.

Bill lay in his bunk for two days and nights and when he got up he was still feeling pretty groggy. The first thing he did was to ask for his "lookin' glass," which was a bit of burnished steel of the kind used by dough-boys in the army. Bill screwed up his face and Jack thought he was going to cry.

"'Tain't no use, pard," he moaned looking at himself.

"No use of what, Bill," Jack asked sympathetically.

"No use in havin' a goil. Look at me map now and tells me, as man to man, could any goil



love a guy what's got one like it. I says no."

"A fellow's face hasn't anything to do with it. It's the kind of a fellow he is down deep in his heart, and the stuff he's made of, that counts, not only with his girl, but with the world at large," urged Jack.

"But look at it. Nobody but a mother could love a face like that," proclaimed Bill, and Jack came very near thinking his partner had spoken rightly.

"Now tell me how it all happened."

"Well," began Bill, putting his hand to his forehead, "I remember I went to the wood-pile and as I was pickin' up an armful o' wood I heard something back of me go *woof! woof!* I said '*woof, woof* yourself' and lookin' 'round I saw this here ornery bear standin' back o' me with his dooks up and ready for a fight. I drops the wood and lets out an orful holler for you to bring a gun but you musta gone to sleep on the stove for you didn't show up.

"Then this here ornery bear makes a reach for me jaw and me and him had a sprintin' match 'round the wood-pile. Finally he catches up with me and lands a gentle little tap on me jaw with his tremenjous right hand and it sen'



me sprawling. Afore I could get up he was on top o' me and I thought I was goin' to be like the hero o' that rime for little kids which runs:

'Algy met a bear;  
The bear was bulgy  
And the bulge was Algy.'

"I had left me six-gun here in the cabin and I had just sense enough left to grab me huntin' knife when I stabbed him every chanst I got.

"We rolls over and over until after a while he and me couldn't roll over any more and then you comes."

"Yes, you drove that knife into him fifty-six times by actual count," said Jack admiringly.

"One more stab and there'd have been enough for an advertisement for a pickle factory," replied Bill.

"You certainly did put him out of commission all right. It must have been a great fight. I tell you I'd like to have seen it," allowed Jack with enthusiasm.

Bill looked up and blinked his eyes at his partner.

"Yes, it was a great fight all right. I'm



sorry you missed it and I wish you could have seen it from the place I did. I allus did prefer broilin' moose-steaks as against killin' a b'ar, and hereafter youse gets the wood. See?"

So ended their hunt for big game.

Now if you will look at a map of Alaska you will see that the Porcupine River is like the letter U laid over on its side; that is to say, its head waters are in Alaska and the stream then flows east over the International boundary into the Yukon Territory, thence north by north-east across the Arctic Circle and when it reaches latitude 137 degrees and longitude about  $67\frac{1}{2}$  degrees, it makes a sharp bend and flows back west by southwest for a couple of hundred miles, when it empties into the Yukon River, between the towns of Beaver and Fort Yukon.

The boys had followed Jack's scheme of going out in every direction like spokes from the hub of a wheel, in which case, as has been previously explained, the hub was the base of their supplies on the Big Black River. And it will also be seen by a reference to the map that this river is a tributary of the Porcupine River and empties into it near Fort Yukon. In fact, Alaska



is a country of rivers and nearly all of them, except those along the coast, are feeders for the Yukon River.

By the middle of March the boys had completed about half of the spokes of the wheel and on this particular trip they had found greater evidences of gold in larger quantities than on any one they had previously made. It was their sixth trip, which took them due south of their base, and at the end of it they came to the head waters of the Porcupine River. Then they traveled down it, or perhaps it would be better to say up it, for in its inception it flows northwest. They met more miners on, and in the vicinity of, the Porcupine River than in all of the rest of their trips put together.

Every little way they would come across a handful of miners who were engaged in the irksome but albeit pleasant task of picking out the pay-streak in a mine, hauling it to the surface and piling it up on the dump. At these camps the boys always lost a lot of time for they would have to stop and give, or get, the latest news from down under which in most instances was from three to five months old. All of the men they met were in the most cheerful



and sanguine frame of mind, which of itself was enough to show that the claims they had staked out were rich in the yellow metal.

At every camp the boys received a most hearty welcome from these rough and hardy men who were wresting treasure from old Mother Earth here in the high, high North. Often they felt that they must push on but they simply could not withstand the temptation of accepting an invite to stay for dinner, supper or breakfast, or as long as they had a mind to, for the men were making their *piles* and under such auspicious circumstances they craved the company of their fellow kind.

Thus it was that when the boys went into the rough log cabins, which were often no better and sometimes a great deal worse than their own, they saw glittering things lying around loose the like of which their cabin could not boast, and these were nuggets of gold in abundance. In one cabin they saw an old molasses can with the cover melted off and it was filled to overflowing with nuggets; in another cabin there was a bucket heaped high with nuggets, while in still another, nuggets were piled up in the corner like coal.



And this treasure was only a small part, an incidental part, of the winnings of these men, for the nuggets were picked up from the pay-streak as it was picked out and shoveled into the buckets, while the gold dust which had a far greater worth was still out in the dumps waiting to be washed in the final clean-up which would take place in the spring.

Bill allowed that the men in Alaska must all be white except for that rotter, Black Pete, for no one watched the gold to keep it from being stolen, nor would there be any need to watch it until they started back on their long journey toward civilization. The boys were at last on the trail of gold!

"Here in this district is gold a-plenty, Jack, if we want to do like the rest of 'em and work for it," said Bill as a feeler, for he had begun to think that, after all, it might be a better paying deal to do a little digging on their own account and get a few thousand out of a place where they knew it was, than to keep on looking for millions laced up in moosehide sacks, when they hadn't the faintest notion of where it was hidden. In other words it was the outcropping of the old cabbage—adage I mean—which says that a ca-



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nary in the cage is worth a couple of them flying around the room with the windows open.

But Jack vetoed the idea, for since they were on the richest claims that had yet been staked by mortal, it stood to reason that right in this district must be the great store of gold they were after. Again, and by the same token, when various miners offered them ten, fifteen, yes, even as high as twenty-five dollars a day to work for them, these generous wages made not the slightest appeal to the boys. If they had to work to get the gold out of the earth, the boys allowed it would be better to do a little prospecting the coming summer, stake out their claims and then go to it the next winter.

“It’s the same old game I’m tellin’ you, pards,” said one of the miners to his companions as the boys drove away after he had made them a particularly alluring offer to go to work. “These young scalawags are after them moose-hide sacks o’ gold as sure as I’m born, and twenty dog-teams couldn’t pull them away from the crazy idee.”

Then the three men laughed a long, loud, and hearty laugh which showed what they thought of the scheme.



## CHAPTER XI

### GOLD, GOLD, NOTHING BUT GOLD

THE boys had made a much longer stay on the end of this last trip out than they had figured on, for now that they were in the heart of the real gold fields they were reluctant to go back until they had explored every part of it.

While gold dust and gold nuggets were to be found in every miner's cabin in amounts ranging up to hundreds of thousands of dollars, still the boys were as poor as ever, for nowhere had they found the slightest signs of gold packed in moosehide sacks and corded up like stovewood.

They had gone through valleys, up and down streams, over tundras, into forests and across lakes and they had combed these districts pretty well, but the only visible effect of their efforts was the exeunt of their good grub and they were fast running short of their reserve rations for both themselves and their dogs.



Both Jack and Bill were growing discouraged but the difference between them was that while the latter never hesitated to voice his innermost thoughts, the former applied the brakes so that his never got to the surface of audible speech.

"This prospectin' business is beginnin' to clog on me phy-si-que," announced Bill, as he was hitching up the dogs preparatory to starting back to their base.

"Suppose you'd been prospecting here for twenty odd years like old '*I Blazes*' we met down at Juneau, or for fifteen, ten, or five years like hundreds of others up here," plugged in Jack.

"That's a hawse of an entirely different breed for they haven't anything else to do, while I have me business, me mother and me goil to look after in little ole Noo York," Bill replied, his eyes snapping with the pure joy of the thought.

New York! how good those two words sounded to Jack, for while Montclair, New Jersey, is where he lived, everybody north of New York as far as Albany, east as far as Coney Island, south as far as the Atlantic Ocean and west as far as Trenton always think of New York as



his *home town* when he gets a respectable distance away from it.

But to get back to Earth and Alaska. The dwindling condition of their food supplies led the boys to go into close caucus as the best means of supporting their party, so they decided to go back to their base at once and bring down a larger store of provisions.

This settled, they repacked their sleds and hitched up the dogs for the trip northward again. They started off with whips a-cracking, bells a-jingling and the dogs in the best of spirits even if their masters were not in such good humor.

"My only regret in leaving Alaska will be that we can't take all of these huskies along with us. I'm going to take 'Frisco and maybe Skookum too," said Jack.

"An' I'm goin' to take old Sate home," said Bill, and when Sate heard this he gave two merry little howls for all the world as if he had understood and, on second thought, there's no doubt but that he did.

"Wouldn't it be great if we could take back both dog teams an' the sleds an' drive them up Fifth Avenoo—wouldn't it be great, Jack?"



His partner gave him the laugh.

"There you go dreaming that same stuff again. It would be a great show for the New Yorkers who don't know how to travel except on trolleys, and trains and in motor cars and hearses. But by the time we get back it will be well along toward the middle of summer so I guess we'll have to call that little day dream of yours off."

"Can't youse even let a fellow dream out loud onct in a while?" Bill inquired petulantly. "It don't cost nothin'."

"Go on and rave then, I don't care," said Jack.

"Well then, just imagine it was winter in Noo York an' us a-drivin' our dog teams up the Avenoo with moosehide sacks o' gold piled on our sleds like cordwood."

"Why, we wouldn't get from Thirty-third Street to Forty-second before there'd be Wild West doings and a dozen gangs of gunmen, any one of which would be as bad or worse than Soapy Smith's, would be holding us up and taking our sacks of gold away from us," Jack told him.



“An’ what would the perlice be doin’ all this time?” asked Bill innocently.

“Oh, they’d be directing the traffic and showing the hold-up men which way to go to keep from being run over by the many motor cars,” Jack replied with all seriousness.

Bill blinked his eyes.

“An’ I suppose we’d be standin’ by with our hands in our pockets lookin’ on. Mush, you huskies, mush!” yelled Bill gruffly and with that the conversation lagged.

All that day they traveled leisurely along and when night came on they had only done some twenty miles. As usual the boys looked after the dogs’ feet and fed them a stinting portion of fish, when they at once dug into the snow with the openings on the south side. Jack and Bill had no intention of making a snow igloo for, like their dogs, they had grown fat upon the good things of the land and in consequence they were not as alert and spry as they had been.

“See them huskies Jack? See the way they’ve crawled in on the south side? That means a high wind from the north to-night and I prognosticates a blizzard comin’. I hates to



think o' it but I guess we'd better build a igloo," was Bill's advice.

"Not so bad when you can use a dog for a barometer, what say Bill?" remarked his partner.

"Sure, they're great animules all right. You can use 'em for Christmas presents, a pair o' suspenders or eat 'em, accordin' to your needs," added Bill to his partner's eulogy on the wide range of usefulness of the husky as an all round convenience.

Now the dogs of the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions are the greatest weather forecasters in the world for when they want to go to sleep they dig a hole out of the snow so that the opening will be to the leese, that is, to the side opposite that which the wind strikes when it blows up in the night.

The dogs forecasted the direction the wind would blow that night with their usual accuracy and Bill's acumen of mind in foreseeing the necessity of an igloo was justified, for a blizzard hurled itself down on them from the north, the thermometer dropped to seventy below, the wind raged and tore around like mad, while the sleet beat down upon and around them with



mighty fury for four whole days and nights without a let-up.

In the meantime the boys stood it, or rather laid down to it, uncomfortably in their igloo, for it was altogether too small for such a prolonged stay. At that they would have gotten along all right but for their short rations, which, if the blizzard had kept up much longer, would have starved them to death. During all this time the dogs had staid in their holes without so much as a bite of fish to eat.

When on the morning of the fifth day the boys pulled away the block of snow that closed the opening to their igloo they found they were snowed under, and after a couple of hour's of hard work they succeeded in digging their way out through ten feet of snow. Then they called their dogs who were likewise sewed up in the blanket of snow. One by one they dug their way out but they were so hungry they were in a mean humor.

Since they had not had anything to eat for so long a time the boys generously gave them half of their fish rations for the time they were entombed, when they became something like their old selves again. It didn't take the boys



long to hitch up and get started but the going was painfully slow and tedious, though they hoped for better sledding when they struck the tundra that lay beyond.

"All I'm asking is that we run into an Indian village, for as our grub-boxes now stand, we'll soon be without anything to eat," said Jack half to himself, as they moved along.

"Funny as how this blizzard couldn't have held off for a couple of days and given us a chanst to get back to our base," grouched Bill just as though the weather cared anything for them; "but what's that I spies down yonder in the valley."

The boys stopped their teams so that they could see to better advantage and took a look at the object in the distance.

"Looks like the top of some miner's cabin," was Jack's opinion. "As it is about noon let's go over, invite ourselves in, eat and be miserable."

"Mush!" they bawled out and made for the cabin which was nearly a mile away.

As they came up to it the only sign of life they saw was a couple of gaunt huskies that looked more like starved timber wolves than



animals of the domesticated canine breed. They snarled and snapped at the boys, which ill manners made the team dogs furiously mad and had they not been in the traces they would have made short work of them. Bill threw each of the starved dogs a piece of fish and in the hopes of getting more they curbed their tempers a bit. In the meantime Jack hallooed time and again outside the door but there was no response from the cabin.

“Whoever lives here can’t be very far away or his dogs wouldn’t stick around,” said Jack. Then he pounded vigorously on the door and hallooed again.

He was about to give it up for a bad job when the door opened a little, but instead of a miner to greet him he was astonished almost out of his wits when he saw before him the frail, wasted form of a young half-breed girl. Then Bill stepped up and he got the shock of his life too.

The girl, who was not more than fifteen years old, said never a word but stared appealingly at them with her big, dark hollow eyes, and then fell suddenly to the floor. The boys were inside the cabin in an instant and it was easy to guess that hers was a case of pure and simple star-



vation. Bill picked her up as though she were a baby and he was going to lay her on a bunk near by when he saw a white man stretched out motionless on it. Hastily laying the girl on another bunk he went to the man, listened to his heart and found that he was still alive.

Jack had not been idle in the meantime but had made some tea and prepared some bouillon and these he gave to both the girl and the man. The tea acted as a stimulant, the bouillon as a food and together they had an almost immediate effect on the girl, for now she opened her wan, lusterless eyes and looked at her benefactors. Then she feebly smiled her appreciation of the kindness of these two strange white boys whom she felt had been sent in this hour of her extreme need by the Great Spirit.

Having got the girl well on the mend, both Jack and Bill gave their undivided attention to the man; but he did not recover so rapidly for with him starvation was an after effect, the primary cause having its origin in a cancer of the stomach which was of several years' standing. But with all of Jack's medical lore and Bill's skill in making new men out of broken down ones; in spite of the strengthening food



and careful nursing, Michael Carscadden, better known as Moosehide Mike, steadily grew worse; for he was sorely in need of an operation.

In the early morning hours he always seemed to be better and on the fifth day after the boys reached the cabin they believed he had a fighting chance; it was on this basis that they held out the hope of his recovery to the girl Eileen. But Michael knew his condition better than did the boys and that same evening, just as the red Arctic sun was slipping down behind the White Mountains, this mighty hunter of moose and of gold knew that he was slipping with it to his last rest. Death had staked out its claim on him. Knowing that the end was not far off he took Eileen in his arms and called the boys to his bedside.

"This little girl is my daughter. Her mother was a full-blooded *Athapascan* and as good a woman as the great God ever put a heart in. A year ago she died and I did not have the strength to get back to civilization with my sacks of gold and as I would not leave without them Eileen and I have lived here alone these last twelve months. My wife was a direct descendant of Yakintat, a Yeehat chief.



“The Yeehats once lived in this district and they had in their possession a great store of gold which they had taken from three white men, of whom a prospector named John Thornton was the leader. In the fight which followed Thornton and his companions were killed. The Chief of the Yeehats *cached* the gold which Thornton and his men had packed in moosehide sacks and its hiding place remained a secret with the tribe.

“A few years after, a plague broke out among the Yeehats and when that ended there was only a handful of them left and these joined other and less fierce tribes. When I reached Alaska I heard, like yourselves and all the others who came here, the story of this great treasure of gold and, like yourselves and many others, I set my heart on finding it.

“I lived with different Indian tribes and, finally, when I was pretty nearly killed by a moose a young Indian woman nursed me back to life and then I married her. She told me many legends and folk-lore tales about the Indians and one of these had to do with a mighty store of gold, the location of which had been handed down to her. She thought of it as nothing more



than a mere story but I took it seriously and me and my Marie set out to find it and find it we did."

The dying gold seeker raised himself on his arm a little and clutched at the collar of his shirt. His eyes brightened with a kind of preternatural light as he continued:

"Yes, there we found it in a cave deep in the side of a hill, bright and yellow nuggets ranging in size from bits as large as a pea to chunks as large as my fist. The moosehide sacks that held it had long since rotted away and the metal had burst through them and lay in heaps on the ground.

"Then it was I became a hunter of moose, not for the love of hunting, not for the meat to eat, but for their hides to make new sacks of. And I killed more moose than any other man hereabouts, unless it be Bull-Moose Joe who lives over there around Mount Burgess in the Yukon. The difference 'twixt him and me is that he hunted the moose a-fore he found the gold whilst I found the gold and then hunted the moose. My Marie and little Eileen and me made new sacks of the hides, packed them full of gold, brought them and here they be."



The boys looked at each other knowingly and shook their heads. They understood perfectly, or thought they did.

"He's got a high fever and is as delirious as they make them," said Jack.

"Bats in his belfry for fair," added Bill.

"No, good friends. My poor daddy is not out of his head. Every word he says is truly so," Eileen told them.

The dying man smiled feebly.

"When I am gone I want you two boys to take my little Eileen with you down under and see that she is brought up like a white lady and given everything that gold can buy. And I want you to watch over and protect her as if she was your own sister. Promise me you will do all this and I will give to each of you one-third of all my gold and Eileen is to have the other third. She will tell you where it is when I am gone and there I want you to bury me."

He stretched out his hands unsteadily toward the boys and they grasped them warmly.

"Do you promise?" he asked almost inaudibly.

"We most solemnly do," answered the boys deep from their hearts.



"Then I shall die in peace."

Her father took Eileen's thin, pale hand in his and kissed it.

"Good-by, little daughter. I hear your mother calling and I must go. I thought that I would live to take you down under but it is not to be. Instead your mother and me will meet you in the sweet bye and bye. And may the great, good God above us bless you."

Her hand fell out of his and she threw her arms around his neck.

"Good-by, dear, dear Daddy; good-by," she sobbed, and then fell prostrate across the inert body of her father from which his spirit had just taken flight.

Jack lifted her gently back to her own bunk, while Bill drew a blanket over the dead man's face and turned away with something mighty like tears in his blue eyes.

That night was the most solemn and heart-rending one any of these young folks had ever experienced, for to the young, death is ever gloomy. The boys built a good fire, lit half-a-dozen candles and did all they could to soften the weight of the blow which had fallen on Eileen, but their efforts were in vain.



To add to the melancholy of the occasion the dogs, instead of crawling into their holes after they had eaten their half-rations of fish, sat in a semi-circle outside of the cabin door and in the ghostly light of the streaming aurora borealis, with their noses pointed skyward, they spent the greater part of the night howling mournfully a last requiem for the departed soul.

The next morning the boys set to work to fashion a casket to hold the remains of Michael Carscadden, and it took them the best part of three days to finish it. Then they put his body in his sleeping bag and laid it in the rough hewn box.

Eileen was so weak and dazed she seemed hardly to realize what it was all about. As she lay on her bunk she only stared with wide-open, pathetic eyes at these last sad arrangements. It was merciful that she did not understand to the full.

The boys gave her all the food they could scrape together and did without themselves for they had to get her strong enough to travel. Starvation was close on their heels. Bill's solution for the shortage of food was that they



kill one of the sled-dogs but Jack would not listen to such a thing.

“I’m no cannibal Bill, and I’d as leave eat my grandmother as I would one of our dogs,” was the way he disposed of this brash idea of his partner.

Jack figured that they could last just three days longer and by the end of that time they would have to be back at their base of supplies, or they would never get there.

“We must leave your father now, Eileen, and will you tell us where it is he wished to sleep his last sleep?” Jack was finally forced to ask her.

He had waited as long as he could for he greatly feared that in her weakened condition she might not survive this last sad ordeal. But in Eileen’s veins flowed the blood of Irish stoics and Indian chiefs and she accepted the inevitable with great courage and fortitude.

“Under the floor,” she replied as bravely as she could.

“He chose well,” Bill whispered, “for here the wolves can’t get him.”

“The cabin will be the tomb of a true Alaskan



gold seeker here in the heart of the wild north-land," said Jack reverently.

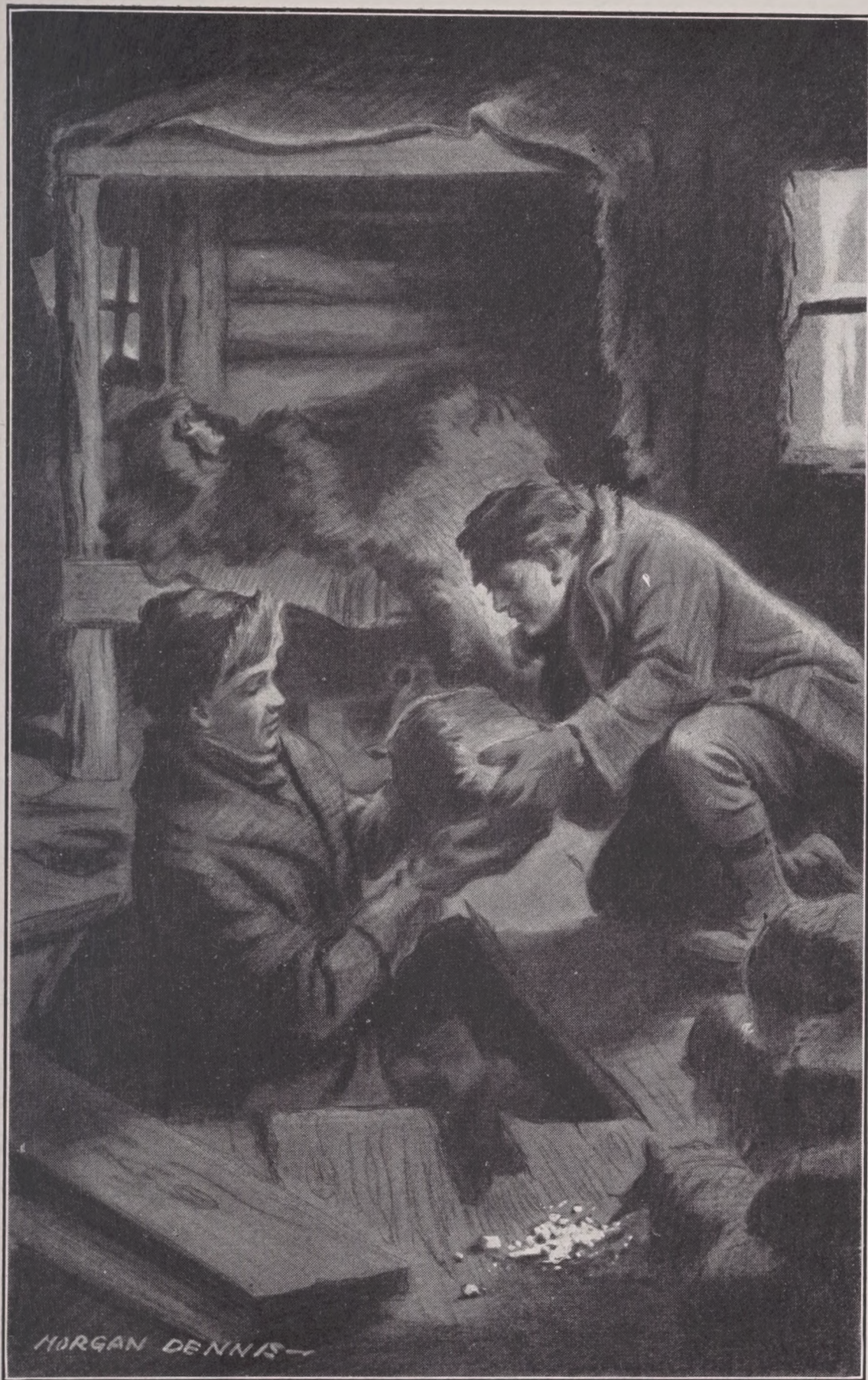
The boys commenced to tear up the heavy timbers that formed the floor of the cabin and when they had a couple of them up what they saw underneath almost caused their senses to leave them, for there in a big pit lay *sack upon sack made of moosehide piled up like cordwood!*

Bill lowered himself into the pit and lifted out the sacks to Jack who piled them up against the wall. The rawhide thongs had come loose from some of them and the shining yellow metal poured out in a golden stream about the floor.

When hardships and starvation overtook the boys they knew them for stern realities but having stumbled upon the great store of gold in this wholly unexpected manner and under such surprising conditions they didn't know whether it was truly so or merely a wild and woolly dream. They really didn't. To them it was all too wonderful for any human explanation.

While they were hard at work getting up the sacks, the gold seeker who slept on yonder bunk and the half-breed girl who lay weak and helpless on the other bunk were well nigh forgotten for they were the masters of gold that made





“‘GOLD! GOLD! NOTHING BUT GOLD!!!’”

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them as rich as the ancient Cræsus or the modern Rockefeller.

“Gold! gold!! Nothing but gold!!! I tell you Bill,” ejaculated Jack in the wild frenzy of the gold seeker who has made his strike.

“Yes, old pard, and we’ve got it in our clutches where it won’t get away,” returned Bill, just as excitedly. “Jack I’ve got to take my hat offen to you for bein’ the only, original man with the hunch that always makes good.”



## CHAPTER XII

### BACK TO THE HAUNTS OF MEN

AFTER the boys had taken the sacks of gold out of the pit they lowered the rude box that held all that was mortal of Michael Carscadden into it; stood with Eileen by the open grave with bowed heads and made their silent prayers for him. Then Bill played *Nearer My God To Thee* on his mouth-organ and never before had he played the toy musical instrument so sweetly and with such feeling.

This done the boys filled in the space around and above the box with snow which they packed down tight; then they came to rigid attention, gave the military salute and Bill sounded *taps* on his mouth-organ when the simple but sincere service was over. So ended the life of adventure and romance of one of Alaska's greatest hunters of moose and seekers of gold—Michael Carscadden.

After the boys had put back the heavy hewn



timbers, which formed the floor, they fell to discussing the best way to get Eileen and the gold over to their permanent camp, for it was about as hard a puzzle as getting the fox, the geese and corn across the river.

There were three ways of doing it but as two of them necessitated leaving Eileen alone at one or the other of the cabins they did not think well of either of these and hence eliminated them. The matter resolved itself down to the conclusion that the only feasible plan was for them all to go together and take along the gold at the same time.

"You can hitch up my dogs, boys," spoke up Eileen, "then you will have seven dogs in each team and they can haul these heavy loads."

"But your dogs are nothing but skin and bones, Eileen," Jack explained to her, and I doubt very much if they will be able to drag themselves back to our camp, let alone do any team-work."

"Here we are millionaires in our own right an' only half-a-pound of tea, a dozen biscuits and two cans of pemmican left and our dogs a-starvin' to death. I'll give a hundred dollars for a beefsteak as big as my hand," said Bill,



and he meant it, but there were no takers, for here in the frozen wilderness gold had lost its purchasing power.

That night while Eileen slept, the boys loaded the heavy sacks on their sleds and on one of them they made a comfortable bed for her of bear-skins. Then Jack prepared a pot of tea, doled out a single biscuit and a spoonful of pemmican for each hand and called Eileen to "breakfast." While she was getting ready for the long journey the boys went out and whistled for the dogs but they were in no great hurry to leave their warm holes.

Less than half a ration of fish apiece was their share but they are long suffering beasts and actually seemed thankful for the little that they got. As Bill was hitching up his team, Sate, his lead dog, caught his eye and his master's heart went out to him.

"Sate, you poor dum animule, you'll get your fill o' rations, I'm thinkin', when we hits our camp," he told him as he gave him a couple of love pats on the head.

"You're all right, pard. You're the goodest driver in all Alaska and I know it isn't your fault that we're starved out," Sate said good-



naturedly. At any rate he howled a couple of times cheerfully which was his way of saying it in short-hand dog-language.

When Jack went into the cabin Eileen had taken her last leave of her sleeping father whose burial place she might never see again.

"We're all ready to go, Eileen," he called cheerily.

"I am ready to go too, Jack," she said simply; "there is nothing for me to stay for now."

Jack picked her up and carried her out to his sled where he put her in her sleeping bag and tucked a lot of big fur robes around her.

It was an hour or more before the night would fade into day, yet so bright gleamed the aurora borealis that it was easily light enough to see to travel. Their whips cracked, the commands to *mush* were given to the teams, the bells jingled, but there was lacking the great vibrant joy that comes of living in the open which usually marked their going. The sleds were heavy with gold, but Eileen's daddy had been left behind and they were on the ragged edge of starvation.

Even when they reached the tundra the sleds did not pull easily for they were overloaded and



the dogs were weak from hunger so that instead of enjoying themselves racing along in the traces, gold had made them work-dogs with all that this hard term implies.

Nor were the boys more kind to them because of the gold and hardship that had been thrust upon them. Rather they gave their orders in harsher tones and plied their whips harder and more often. The dogs well knew that there had been a great and sudden change in their lives and they laid it all to the girl who rode, when, according to their canine way of thinking, she by rights ought to and should have walked.

And Eileen thought so too and she often asked the boys to let her walk with them that the loads might be made the lighter but they would not hear of it. Her little added weight made no difference, according to Jack, and besides, alleged Bill, the dogs could stand it for once, for never had huskies been taken care of better, done so little real work, or had suffered less from hunger.

It took them two days and the best part of another one before they reached their camp and it was lucky for them that the time was not prolonged for that noon they had drunk their last



drop of tea, eaten the last crumb of biscuit and particle of pemmican, and given their dogs the last bite of fish. So hungry had Bill become that he had marked out the dog he was going to kill to provide provender for them all, but fate was kind to the dog, and to Bill, for he was not called on to do this act of sabotage.

When they at last got to their camp Bill was as good as his word and fed the dogs a dozen rations of fish and moosemeat and having downed this in as many gulps they began to show signs of life and decency again. Jack threw together a real meal, the first that Eileen had eaten in weeks, nay months, and oh, how good those Alaska strawberries tasted! They were indeed a delicious fruit.

After the boys had gorged themselves they counted up their sacks of gold to make sure that none had escaped either by way of the door or up the chimney, and in their youthful ardor they were on the very verge of giving vent to their repressed feelings in true western style, and whoop things up. But somehow they simply couldn't do it with that frail, slip of a girl, weakened by months of misery and starvation, and all of her own people gone out of



her life forever, lying there on the bunk following their every movement. Once she smiled, ever so faintly, and the light of a new life was in her eyes and the peace of contentment was on her face.

After policing up the cooking utensils and setting things to rights a bit they turned the cabin over to Eileen and built a snow igloo of goodly size just outside the door, for their own quarters. Now that the precious metal they had sought for so long and hard was theirs they were keen to start back to the haunts of men, but Eileen did not grow strong as rapidly as they had hoped for and there was naught else for them to do but stay.

Then the question came up as to the safest way to get their winnings from their cabin in the Alaskan wilds back to the Atlantic seaboard and into the *Empire Safe Deposit Company's* vault. Convoying a cargo of gold nuggets, to say nothing of chaperoning a little Irish-Indian maid, from the almost unknown heart of this great sub-Arctic country, over rivers, sea and land and into the most thickly inhabited part of the world was, they realized, no small undertaking.



"There are two trails we can take to get to Seattle," began Jack.

"One is the way we came up," interrupted Bill, "and the other—"

"Is for us to sled down the Big Black and Porcupine Rivers to Fort Yukon, then take a Yukon River steamer to St. Michaels, over on Norton Sound, and from that place sail on a regular steamer that goes direct to Seattle."

"But that way is longer by a thousand miles," protested Bill.

"I know it is but if we go to Circle City and then up the Yukon River to White Horse we'll have to cross over into Yukon Territory and the chances are we'll have to hand over a ten per cent tax on our hard-earned winnings to the Canadian Government; besides they'll be liable to make us do a lot of explaining as to where we got it from, and I hold it's nobody's business. Get me?"

Bill batted his eyes.

"Afore I'd pay a nickel tax on our dust I'd drive over to the North Pole and go around by the way of Greenland," was his emphatic rejoinder.

Now there are a lot of terse phrases such as



“nothing succeeds like success,” “a fool and his money are soon parted,” *et cetera*, and another might be to say that nothing makes most fellows so stingy as coming into possession of a fortune, for it was evident that these usually over-generous boys had “tightened up” since this golden manna had risen from the pit where it was *cached* in such a strange manner. They were, as Bill expressed it “fools for luck.”

Eileen was not progressing as fast as they thought she would though she improved slowly and surely. Good food, the best care, cheerful companionship and strong arms to look after her every want had made a wondrous change in this frail little girl who had dropped to the floor from exhaustion only a fortnight before. One thing was sure, however miserly the boys had grown in their minds, they took a tremendous interest in this silent half-breed child whose father had been the means of making them as rich as the richest caliph and that, you will allow, is pretty rich.

Eileen in turn recognized in them messengers sent by the Great Spirit who had saved her life, and as she watched them go about their work, heard them talk of their plans, and what



they would do with and for her when they got home, she knew they were, like the nuggets in the sacks, twenty-four carats fine.

At first she couldn't quite make Bill out, especially when he smiled, for the very emotion that nature intended a smile to represent, that terrible scar across his cheek gave the opposite appearance. Sometimes Eileen would look at him so curiously that Jack thought perhaps, she might be a little afraid of him, so one day while Bill was out getting some wood Jack told her how he came by that scar and the kind of a fellow he was as a friend and a fighter.

Came that day when all agreed that Eileen could safely make the sled trip down to Fort Yukon and, indeed, it was high time, for spring was fast coming on and this meant that the snow would melt, the ice grow thin and rotten and the bottom drop out of the trail at any moment.

So again the gold and the girl were loaded on the sleds and the long awaited start back home was made—a journey of some six thousand miles. Many things can happen in making a trip of even less length, aye, and *did* happen as you shall presently see.



It was not often that the dogs got into any very serious fights but there had been bad blood between Eileen's Indian dogs and Jack's and Bill's dogs from the time they first met and they would have discarded the Indian dogs long before but as each team was short a dog and the two *scrubs*, as Bill called them, could haul their full share, they kept them.

At the first camp they made, going down the Big Black River, Link one of the Indian dogs and Dave, of Jack's team, got into a fight over so small a thing as a piece of fish that neither of them had, and before the boys could separate them Link lay very close to the edge of the world next to come. It was a calamity that this fight should have happened a day after instead of a week before they started for it proved to be the most costly dog-fight that was ever pulled off anywhere, bar none.

Bill was for leaving the dog and going on but Jack said it was best to stay in camp for a few days and let Link's wound's heal, for they had great need of him as both sleds were loaded to the guards and it was all that a full team of seven dogs each could haul. Then again Jack had conscientious scruples against shooting the



dog or turning him loose in the wilds. (Perhaps because Link belonged to Eileen). But before Link was whole again another seven days had slipped by and spring was pressing winter hard for first place.

The days were getting longer and so warm that their thick fur clothing was quite uncomfortable and they must needs change into their mackinaws. The melting snow and running water everywhere made sledding overland out of the question but the trail was still holding on the river though here and there holes appeared and cracks separated the more solid stretches of ice. Time was up and they must push on.

Jack took the lead as he had Eileen on his sled and Bill's outfit came on a little ways behind. Another day's march and they came to some rapids where the air holes were larger and the ice bent under the weight of their treasure. Jack was ahead of his team picking the way across the treacherous trail when all of a sudden Bill let out a blood-curdling yell of the Apache variety, and on looking back he and Eileen saw that he and his sled and Jinx, the wheel dog had gone through the ice while Sate and the rest of



the team were straining every muscle to the breaking limit to keep from being dragged down into the icy waters behind them. The pole that Bill had taken the precaution to carry saved him from going under but try as he would he could not get out.

Running back at top speed Jack had the situation sized up long before he reached the scene of disaster. When he was within a dozen feet of the team he made a mighty slide, as a man sliding for home with three on bases, and drawing his hunting knife from its sheath at the same time, the instant he came alongside the last dog he cut the traces. Relieved of the mighty weight so suddenly the team fell headlong forward and sprawled about on the ice; at the same moment the sled, with over half of the moosehide sacks of gold on it, and Jinx, the wheel dog, dropped to the bottom of the river. Jack then helped Bill out and on getting back to the former's team they made an air line for the shore.

It would add nothing to the gayety of the world to relate what Jack said to Bill and Bill said to Jack and what both of them said about the loss of their vast fortune so soon after they



had found it. Eileen was the peace maker and she told them they still had enough gold to keep them forever and ever (she had never lived in New York) and that the loss of the gold mattered not a whit as long as Bill had been saved. And both of the boys came to think that she had the right view of it at that.

The result of the dreadful mishap was a pow-wow in which it was resolved first, that they couldn't afford to take any further chances on the *last ice* with either Eileen or the remainder of their treasure, second, that spring was altogether too far advanced to make any further attempt to get to Fort Yukon with their remaining sled, and third, that they must mark the spot where the gold went down so that they could recover it when conditions were more favorable.

"The only thing for us to do now," declared Jack, "is to camp right here until the *first water* and then build a boat or a raft and float on down to Fort Yukon, which is some seventy miles from here. In the meantime we'll build up a cairn of rocks on each side of the river and in a line with the sunken yellow stuff so that when we do come back we'll know right where it is."



"An' one good thing no one else 'ull ever guess out where it is," philosophized Bill.

The boys made a fairly comfortable camp and set about building a raft of spruce logs which they lashed together with rawhide thongs. When this was done and they could get across the river they built up a great pile of rocks on either side of it but well back from the shore. Before another moon rolled round they were ready to make a fresh start down the river.

"What about these huskies here," asked Bill, who aways kept his weather-eye open for the welfare of their dogs even though they didn't have any more use for them.

"We'll turn them loose and they'll follow us along the shore all right," replied Jack, and so that little matter was settled.

They loaded the remaining sacks of gold, their outfit and provisions, of which precious little was left, onto the raft. In the middle they had built up a platform of saplings for Eileen to sit on to the thoughtful end that when the raft struck the rapids and took a notion to dive, like a submarine, the water would not wash over and wet her.

Then Eileen took her seat on the platform,



Jack stood on the front end and Bill on the diagonal corner of the rear end and with their long poles they pushed their treasure float off shore. As Jack had said, the huskies followed them and they kept as close to the edge of the river as they could, barking and howling furiously as they ran along.

It took very little effort on the part of the boys to steer the raft and none at all to keep it moving as the current was augmented all along by rivulets and streams from the melting snows. Where the river was wide and the water shallow the raft sailed gently along but where the channel was narrow the boys had to do some tall maneuvering to keep it from getting swamped.

The rapids, of which there were many, were their despair. When the ungainly craft struck these eddying currents it pitched and rolled about like a piece of cork and the little crew had to hang on to it for dear life. In this exciting fashion they covered the rest of the distance down the Big Black River. Just before they came to the mouth where it empties into the Porcupine River the bed made a sharp descent and the water rushed down it in a mighty torrent.



There was a bend in the river ahead of them and this too they successfully navigated, but a rock, that projected out of the water, and which was directly in their course, proved their undoing. Jack managed to get his pole on it and brought all of his strength to bear to keep the raft clear of it, but the weight and the momentum were too great and a corner struck it with such force that Eileen and the boys were thrown bodily into the water.

It was well for them that they were good swimmers and after a struggle with the swift current all of them landed on the shore like bags of wet rags. Then the huskies covered with mud and rending the air with their vocal organs swarmed round them.

Never in all his life had Jack felt more like crying. He could stand any kind of bodily pain but with all of their gold gone he suffered exquisite mental torture. Many a prospector in the early days had killed himself for less bad luck. Bill seemed to be not all there for he acted queerly and talked about the little "boodies" that were singing in the trees, the "bloomin'" flowers that bloomed in the spring,





"THE UNGAINLY CRAFT PITCHED AND ROLLED ABOUT LIKE  
A PIECE OF CORK."

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and other like idiotic fancies that hadn't anything to do with the case, tra, la.

Eileen was the only one who had kept her wits about her. She reasoned with the boys, or at least she tried to; she told them how very, very, lucky they were in that for the second time none of them were drowned, and as for the gold it was a blessed good thing it was all gone, she said, for it only brought bad luck.

Bill looked at her as she spoke these consoling words in a funny kind of way, as though he'd just got out of a merry-go-round and didn't quite know where he was.

"Eileen," he managed to say, blinking at her; "I wouldn't even let a perliceman talk that way to me. If you was me pard, Jack here, I'd make you put up your dooks, see."

Eileen laughed as if either he, or what he had said, was a great joke, and what's more, she laughed out loud—the first time since they had known her. Then Jack laughed, and Bill, not to be left out in the cold, joined them with his hearty guffaw. And there the three of them sat on a fallen tree, water soaked, bedraggled,



dead broke and as miserable as possible, laughing fit to kill.

Having had experience in losing things, including a few mere sacks of gold and a lot of provisions when his sled went down, Bill had insisted before they embarked on their raft that they should each carry a day's rations strapped to their backs. Building a big fire they dried their clothes and had their drop of tea and bit of pemmican and after that they felt much better, and quit laughing.

The huskies fared very much *a la* Mother Hubbard's dog, which is to say that the cupboard was bare and so the poor brutes had none, no, not even a piece of fish to eat.

"Well, one good thing," said Bill, whose pemmican had revived him again, "we won't have to mark this blarsted spot where the last bit of our gold was dumped for I'd know that rock if I saw it a thousand miles off Fire Island."

Jack and Eileen took a good look at the projecting finger which wouldn't get out of the way of their raft, and they agreed with Bill that it was a monument of misfortune which having once been run into could never be forgotten.



As they were only twenty some odd miles from Fort Yukon these youngsters started out to walk there, or "hoof it" as Bill so inelegantly expressed it. They had not gone more than a couple of miles when they came upon—no, it couldn't be, and yet there it was—their raft beached on the shore and on it there still remained three of the moosehide sacks of gold.

As Jack had often told Bill conditions are largely a matter of mind and truly it seemed so. For see you now, when they first stumbled on the pit of gold in Carscadden's cabin they were not nearly as elated as one would have thought they'd be. Then when they lost the sled load of gold, though they were still millionaires, they were as sore at heart and mad at each other as they could be. When they lost all of their treasure and were dead-broke they laughed, and now having recovered three sacks of it they simply went wild with joy. Can you beat it?

It was a remarkable trio of youngsters that landed from their raft at Fort Yukon on that never-to-be-forgotten day in July. At any rate so said the inhabitants of that burg. Hoboes



couldn't have looked more disreputable. And the huskies were all there too, mean, lean and dog dirty.

The crowd at the landing that gathered round this motley little group scarce knew what to make of it, they felt so sorry for these woe-begone "kids." But when they saw Bill take two moosehide sacks filled with something that was tremendously heavy under his arms and Jack take another and third one on his shoulder, the half-breed girl trudging along between them and their teams of huskies sticking as close to them as they could get without being stepped on, their mute sorrow changed to open expressions of surprise. Here was something to talk about to the end of time.

"Moosehide sacks filled with gold! by jimminy!" blurted out an old timer.

"An' them kids found it where we couldn't," exclaimed another bitterly.

And so on, and so on.

They went over to the Crystal Hotel and while Bill stood guard over what was left of their treasure, Jack took Eileen across the street to the *New York Emporium* and there they out-



fitted themselves and Bill for the trip down to St. Michaels. When they next appeared in public there had been a great transformation for Eileen was a brand new girl and Jack and Bill were almost themselves again.

Eileen, as pretty as ever an Irish lass and an Indian maid blended into one could be, had her hair done up, wore a blue traveling dress, a sailor hat and, cross my criss cross, she had on stockings and shoes, which latter, let it be whispered, she would willingly have traded for a pair of old moccasins.

The boys were clean, well groomed and had their hair cut. They wore real store clothes—all wool suits that looked as if the price tag on them had been marked up to \$7.65 from \$5.67. When they walked their shoes squeaked at every step like a duck having its neck wrung. They were rich, genial and willing to talk on any subject they didn't know anything about, but of the moosehide sacks filled with gold, they said never a word.

Yet, with all their good humor the boys were ready to pull the triggers of their six-guns on the bat of an eyelid should any one get the idea



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in his head that he was going to relieve them of their treasure. And they guarded Eileen with the same jealous care.

A week's run on the steamboat down the Yukon landed them at St. Michael, and once there they shipped their sacks of gold by express through to New York City when a part of their great responsibility was lifted from their minds. In a month's time Jack and Bill were back where they had started from, while Eileen was being petted and pampered by the swell-dom of Montclair.

THE END















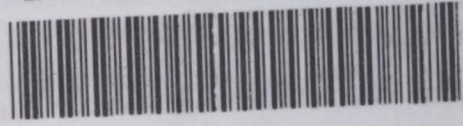








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